BISCHOF DR. JOSEPHUS MEILE

DIE JUNGFRÄULICHEN SEELEN IN DER WELT

THE VIRGIN PLACE IN THE WORLD

MILE/THE VIRGIN SOULS IN THE WORLD

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THE VIRGIN SOULS IN THE WORLD

1950

THIRD ORDER HEADQUARTERS SCHWYZ

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FOREWORD

In the three parishes which we once had to take care of, we founded a special group within the framework of the Congregation of Virgins for those virgins who wanted to remain single. Not only the female youth, but also the older guard should be cared for religiously, according to their needs. The less the older virgins are endangered, the more the pure virginal ideal can be cultivated there. From these lectures and exercises, the retreats were held (1931), at the end of which, with the permission of the bishop, a private consecration took place. Because these events were so well received, one could not simply pass them by in silence or criticism. In some places they were imitated and in these and those magazines the ideal of virginity was discussed.

Soon it will be 20 years since we were asked to write a book for the virgin souls in the world. However, we hesitated for a long time, foreseeing no small difficulties, both theoretically and practically. Once again we wanted to shrink back from the task when we became aware of all the problems that today are connected with the ideal of virginity. However, we were not left alone. Finally, we decided to write a popwläre writing. On the critical-scientific forms ha

We did without it completely. The study has amply compensated us for the effort. Virginity is a wonderful ideal for which one must be enthusiastic.

For the time being, we address those virgin souls who live in the world outside. Religious-spiritual care is already taken for the convent women. But the older virgins in the world often ask how they should adjust their lives. Especially they would like to have an ideal. Religious admonitions and warnings are given in abundance to such virgins in the books. But it is a question of working out the special ideal for these virgins. Once they have grasped the ideal, they still have to know how to realize it in their particular circumstances of the world. Neither of these is a small matter. There is a lack of understanding in wide circles. We would like to offer suggestions and teachings both to the virgins who feel neglected or ridiculed, and to the virgins who still need to be awakened and inspired. Even if we intentionally address a narrower circle of virgins, it is not said that other people cannot find anything edifying in this book. The ideal of virginity has such great significance in the world that Christians should have some idea of it.

Virginity has been widely discussed in recent decades in terms of ecclesiastical history, liturgy and mysticism. But what

still missing was the confrontation with the dsychological and social problems. Among the virgin souls in the world, these questions are particularly burning. Therefore, we called together lively unmarried ladies to discuss these perspectives with them in detail. Some also complied with our request to put their wishes, needs and views in writing shortly. We made it a point to hit the reality of life as well as possible. Therefore, we could not neglect the literature, which we list at the end. We also sought contact with theologians who deal with these problems. For this reason we also dab here and there on opinions which we could not further evaluate for our topic and for our circle of readers. The book was not allowed to exceed a certain size.

We are happy to be able to entrust this work to the Third Order Center. Most Reverend Father Felizian Beßmer, who has a rich experience, has shown us the greatest goodwill, for which we are very grateful to him.

Two young and joyful souls in the world were canonized during the Holy Year: Maria Anna de Paredes and Maria Goretti. May they help with their intercession that this book may spread great blessings.

St. Gallen, July 29, 1950. Josernus, BiscHor.

Years ago we were called to a virgin who was 70 years old and on her deathbed. In her attic we found a small lamp: What good is this old-fashioned lamp? In answer to this question, the pious virgin told the story of her virginal life: “About 35 years ago, I wept bitterly in church. I complained to a priest who wanted to comfort me: “They reproach me for becoming an old maid. But I do not feel called to marry. With a few words, Father gave me the following advice: buy a small oil lamp, similar to the one they had in the catacombs, and light it at least once every week, and then pray seven Hail Marys to the Blessed Virgin Mary. A year later I met Father again. I joyfully explained: “Mary has given me the grace to appreciate the value of virginity more and more. But the Father asked: Do you know what the little lamp is supposed to mean? The oil is the virgin soul and the little flame is Christ Himself. The burning lamp is a symbol of her spousal relationship with Christ. Afterwards, I studied even more assiduously the ideal of virginity as it was cultivated in the first centuries of Christianity. My life is, after all, a proof that this ideal can be

I.

THE LIFE SITUATION OF VIRGINS AS A MODERN PROBLEM

1. different forms of virginity

in life

Virginity has the important task of religiously enhancing and transfiguring the perfect chastity of the celibate. The basic idea of virginity unites two elements: to give oneself completely to God and to be richly pardoned by God, to want to please God especially and to be allowed to enjoy the special pleasure of God. A virgin soul renounces earthly things as much as possible and abandons everything in spirit and sacrifices everything for God. It consecrates itself to the special service for God and struggles for it with all its strength. Of course, it can only do this if God chooses it for this or accepts it for this. God obligates her to a more intimate service and gives her his great grace to carry it out. The virgin soul, which has consecrated itself to God, must prove itself receptive to this in practical life. This consecration of self to God often takes place in the presence of the Church, and the Church, in the name of Christ, grants the consecration and classification. If one or the other element is more prominent, we have the different forms of virginity.

The pontifical (episcopal) consecration of young women, still practiced today in some monasteries of the Bene

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The consecration that is solemnly given to the female deaconesses designates or elevates the virgins to the status

of brides of Christ. They are consecrated virgins in the strictest sense.

Already at the free entrance into the subdeaconate, the clergy were obliged by the Church to celibacy. This obligation is included in the total sacrifice to the priesthood for full service in the Church, an obligation which in its ideal implementation has a parallel with virginity.

Whoever enters the monastery should leave everything, not only external goods, but also himself. If one renounces even free will, it is easy to understand that one also sacrifices the bodily faculties for the higher. Thus, virginity belongs to the whole devotion. In the sisters' congregations, precautions are taken by the rule so that virginity does not suffer damage in a certain contact with the world.

At all times we also find young women in the world who vowed perfect chastity or virginity, detached from the vows of poverty and obedience. Thus, virginity is more independent here, as it was in early Christianity. Over such a vow the Church holds the protective hand, reserving the dispensation of the highest authority.

Some say that very active virtues are required if a virgin wants to maintain perfect chastity in the outside world.

ren. Thus, they attribute some masculine power to the virgin souls. Others, however, emphasize that it is in no case feasible without special grace. It is therefore more a matter of receptivity or fulfillment, as it is peculiar to the female sex in a special way. If virginity is cultivated as bridehood, it is

attributed to women. In the mystical sense, however, every soul can be a bride of Christ.

2. the growing interest in the problem

the virginity

The books for virgins, written towards the end of the nineteenth century, give instructions on how virgins can protect perfect chastity in all the dangers of the present time. “The Christian virgin in the world” was the constant ‘theme. Occasionally those virgins were comforted who for some reason did not get married. Often the members of the sisters’ congregations were presented to them as models who maintain perfect chastity intact in the midst of the world. There were also single virgins in the world who freely renounced marriage in order to be able to do greater things in the social field. Against the enlightenment of the libertinists, this virginal life was defended in the ecclesiastical spirit.

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1. the life situation of virgins as a modern problem

The history books have again paid greater attention to the “Institute of Consecrated Virgins”. This was not only a historical matter, but it was seriously considered whether the ideal of virginity should not be cultivated in a new form. Even before that, a Marian movement had arisen in which the Blessed Virgin Mary was especially venerated as the Immaculate Virgin. In France, Coulin explicitly asserted (1854) that he expected from Marian devotion a revival of the virginal ideal. Frassinetti popularized the idea in Italy, and Strele and Seeböck in the German-speaking area. The writings which also dealt with this “womanly problem” became more numerous from the turn of the century.

The idea did not venture further out before the First World War. Without a doubt, the /turgical movement has a merit that a significant progress has been achieved. Not only the ancient prayers of virgin consecration, but also the liturgical texts with which the Church celebrated the virgin saints, made an impression on the virgins. The religious courses in which the ideal of virginity was explained in our country since 1931 caused a wave of enthusiasm. Criticism could not stop this wave. In order to satisfy the older virgins who were looking for this ideal in their own organizations, the leaders themselves organized such courses, and they

3. the tragic situation of many virgins in the world

The problem of virginity was also dealt with in magazines. In some places, the youth groups that arose during the renewal of the associations were opposed by sections of older virgins. Despite all efforts, however, a lively, clear and independent movement for virginity was not established.

3. the tragic situation of many young women in the world

There is a virgin in her older years standing in front of a monastery gate. Why is she asking to be admitted? Certainly, the “convent” would be a wonderful profession. But her motive is not genuine: she does not want to become an “old maid” in the world. She is rejected in advance or she soon realizes herself that she is not called. What should she be advised to do? Marriage and the family are portrayed in the most beautiful colors today. But what kind of mothers will those virgins become who marry merely out of aversion to “old maidhood. At the first difficulty they complain: “Now I have the punishment! I didn’t really want a man. In spite of these difficulties, in the world they say: Either to the

monastery or to marriage! We believe that professions have already been missed because a third one, the virginal state in the world, was not considered in the choice. Perhaps some would not have rushed into an invalid or too daring marriage,

the possibility of a chrenful virgin life would have become clear to her at the right time.

Many virgins today have an economic profession with which they can support themselves all their lives. They do not have to look for other means of support. Even if the profession is excellent, they often do not feel satisfied at the age of thirty. There remains a spiritual void, which could be filled by a spiritual-religious ideal. But they know nothing of a virginal ideal. For this very reason, a virgin sometimes leaves her secure existence and goes over to a social and charitable activity. Certainly, the beauty and dignity of the work is no longer lacking. But when worries come to her, she often lacks spiritual strength and religious idealism. It is therefore unable to cope with complicated circumstances.

What should a virgin start in this situation of life? Once she may have heard from afar that virginity was a religious ideal. But in her surroundings this has always been denied. The ideal, which God wanted to give her, is still snatched from her hands by the people. Spo/ and flohn is the consolation, which she may receive daily. This fate is not only given to individuals, but to thousands. When they call for help, they are callously told that there is no ideal left for them. They are simply the “leftovers” who are left in this situation in the

4. the regrettable standstill in front of the gate

They are not left in the lurch. Even the leadership, especially if it should be a common leadership, is still denied to them. Nothing but incomprehension! No one wants to grasp their situation. Didn’t the Savior predict that in many cases people do not “grasp it”? Even the older virgins themselves sometimes do not want to grasp it. They put away invitations to courses on virginity and sit idly at home. These are also “sitters.” It is tragic that their dull sense cannot be inspired for anything higher.

4. the bedazer standstill in front of the gate

Let us imagine virginity as a splendid garden, which can be opened only with a special key. In front of this gate are placed the frail people, who by nature are discouraged from getting married.- Couldn’t the beauties of the garden offer them ample substitute? The mystery is often hidden from them, even though they have come so close. One virgin writes: “It is a great happiness to be taught early about the ideal of virginity.” This would also be good for those virgins who sacrifice themselves for their family, for parents or siblings. One such daughter tells us, “Now my loved ones have died…. and now I am unhappy.” How happy could such a virgin become, if at the right time she were to discover the flower of virginity?

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I. The life situation of virgins as a modern problem

cover. Isn’t it a pity that some people just stop at the door of happiness?

This happiness is also missed by the undecided young women who wait too long. They are briefly characterized by a Virgo: “They are constantly looking for a you and often neglect their own development. Guided and confused by indefinite longing, they pass by further education in character and profession. Later, they are almost unable to give up certain all-too earthly habits and attachments, and so they often fail to gain that freedom of spirit which the ideal of virginity would presuppose. The ascent becomes even more difficult for the embittered who have been deceived or deceived by men. The unpleasant recollection spoils their true concern for the future. Instead of being angry, they should look up to a higher ideal full of hope. This also applies to those who have already been seduced or corrupted. The path of repentance will be strewn with roses if they choose the angel of chastity as their companion, at least for the rest of their lives.

A virgin says: “The love of a profession will certainly keep very few of them from getting married. However, we do not want to overlook the fact that some women also possess extraordinary abilities which they cannot develop in marriage and family. Virginity, if it is really considered as an ideal

5. the life of virgins in modern perspectives

The only one capable of preserving such forces for the culture of mankind would be the one who is able to do this.

A group of elderly women suspects from afar that the spousal Christ Garden would contain beautiful values for them. Before the gate, however, they are held back. The virginal ideal “is still made fun of too much, even in spiritual circles,” as one virgin notes. Because they fear failure or relapse, or because they do not study hard enough, or because they are afraid of more work, they keep silent about the ideal of virginity, or they talk down the “airs and graces” of the ambitious ones, or they call their desires and plans “stupidity.

Even for virgin souls, virginity does not open up all happiness if they slacken in their striving. Even good virgins can experience a standstill. The more the ideal fades away, the more they suffer from their circumstances. Only later do they become aware that they have wasted much in times of despondent fatigue. When they are stirred by heavenly insight, they then confess: “Even though I do not feel unhappy in my position at all, I have now realized that it could be made even greater and more substantial.”

5. the life of young women in modern perspectives

In the writings for virgins, a distinction may be made between virgins who are bound to the

I. The life situation of virgins as a modern problem

The religious life, which is on a higher level, can of course include the ideal of virginity in some way. If one explains a

religious life that moves on a higher level, then of course the ideal of virginity can be included somehow. But this virginity appears as an ideal only when its essence is clearly emphasized: The special and full devotion to Christ, the special spousal relationship with Christ! Of course, this cannot be explained without touching a little on mysticism. At a time when everywhere there is talk of the mystical life, one is probably no longer so afraid of this. Therefore, the Virgin must not think that she has already conquered the real mystical life of the saints. But the virgin must become aware that the bridehood, which constitutes the ideal of virginity, reaches into the higher life of virtue and grace, and is therefore something mystical in its climax. Without eager striving for perfection, this virginal state is not attainable.

No matter how great the religious enthusiasm, the virgin feels at every opportunity that her life is set in the concrete roughness of the world. Some older virgins live in social conditions that are oppressive. Our social time has not yet given the “old maid” that existence in society.

which would correspond to the rules of a true social order. Therefore, the living conditions of the old maids are generally still a social problem today. In the countryside, people are not even aware of these social sufferings. An old maid is sometimes the purest sufferer. In industrial conditions, these social questions come more clearly into the light. But no one would want to claim that they have been satisfactorily solved. These social evils are somewhat to blame for the fact that this or that old maid has acquired a certain psychological peculiarity. If the social difficulties rise

too high, the person also easily becomes psychologically somewhat suffering. The people who reproach the old maids for their peculiarities should first of all beat their own breasts because they have not treated them well socially. Psychological research, which also wants to increase the happiness of the old maids, goes further today. The question of how virginity is adapted to the woman’s nature is studied. A healthy psychological attitude is the necessary natural condition for the religious blossoming of a virgin soul.

Another difficulty is that modern times do not have much sense and understanding for the ideal of virginity at all. For the current of the time is naturalistic and places the sexual, or finally the sensual, everywhere in the foreground. In the public

1. the life situation of virgins sle modern proklem,

In real life, youthfulness becomes much more important.

The virginity is not properly appreciated, even ridiculed, or at least relegated to a corner of society. To defend the virginity and to bring it to hers, writes us a virgin, “urauchen

it competent personalities”, “who are not afraid of the power of men”. If virginity is to be recognized as an ideal in the spiritual sphere, its inner greatness and usefulness must be purified again and again:

U. VIRGINITY

AS A UNIQUE GIFT OF SALVATION

1. the love of Jesus for virginity

The angel Gabriel brought Mary the message that she had been chosen as the Mother of God. Mary, who had earlier taken the vow of virginity, now asks how this is possible: “How will this happen, since I do not recognize a man” (Lk 1:34)? Heaven answers, “The Holy Spirit will descend upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you” (Lk 1:35). So she does not have to renounce virginity. On the contrary. This virginity is presupposed and must therefore be established before anything else. For, according to the prophecy, the Redeemer will be born of a virgin: “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son” (Is 7:14). At Christmas one prays: “The virginity intact gave the Savior to this world” (Communikantes of Christmas). By a special miracle, God saw to it that Christ could be born without somehow violating Mary’s physical virginity. From the “closed garden” the Redeemer emerges. Christ is the “eternal virginity Son”, conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin! Full of astonishment, the Church exclaims in her prayers: “Holy, immaculate virginity!

time! I do not know with what praise I should celebrate you” (Responsory of Christmas). At the moment when Mary became the Mother of God, the Holy Spirit confirmed her virginity by his consecration. Since then, virginity has been held in the highest honor among Christians.

Mary’s virginity, which was hidden and not understood by men, had to have a protector on earth. Wasn’t that a very delicate task? Only a young virgin could fulfill it: St. Joseph! Special graces from heaven qualified him for this high office. Through the angel he was initiated into the mysteries. Now he stands in the highest reverence of the virginity of Mary.

Virginity transfigures the life of the Holy Family in Nazareth: Jesus, the Son of God, the author of virginity! Mary, the Virgin and Mother, the miracle of virginity! Joseph, the nurturing father, the protector of virginity! What a role virginity plays already at the beginning of the history of salvation! In the history of the Church, St. Joseph has always been venerated as the patron of virgin souls.

John the Baptist called himself the “friend of the bridegroom” (John 3:29). Christ sanctified his soul while he was still in the womb. Through the penance in the desert he protected scine perfect chastity, and heaven granted him virgin graces in abundance. Since the Savior was in the public life

2. the evangelical council on virginity

John welcomed him with a virginal greeting: “Behold the Lamb of God” (John 1:29), the heavenly Bridegroom! The task of the forerunner was a virginal one: He prepared humanity as a bride for the Savior, so that Christ could be wed to her at the baptism at the Jordan. In martyrdom he offered up his virginal love for moral renewal.

The apostle John is the disciple “whom the Lord loved” (Jn 13:23), and who was allowed to rest at the Savior’s breast at the Last Supper. Why did he become the disciple of Christ’s love? The Church says: “The extraordinary privilege of virginity made him worthy of this higher love” (Responsory on the Feast of John). For this reason, the dying Savior on the cross entrusted his virgin mother to him: “Behold your mother” (Jn 19:27). “He entrusted the Virgin to the virgin”, it is said in the liturgical prayers (Responsorium of the Feast of St. John). When they wanted to torture him, the boiling oil spared the virgin body. On the island of Pathmos, heaven revealed the virgin mysteries to him.

The passage in the Gospel that clearly and explicitly proclaims the counsel of virginity is this: “There are those who are celibate, who are incapable from the womb, and there are those who are celibate, who are made by men to be celibate.

and there are celibates who voluntarily abstain from marriage for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Whoever can grasp it, let him grasp it” (Mt 19:12). So Christ distinguished three types: unfit, prevented and voluntary. Under certain circumstances, it is better for a person not to marry. Guided by His preference for virginity, Christ desires that in the Church there always be a number living virginal lives. Of course, man must beware of choosing the virginal state for ignoble motives: Out of dislike or contempt for marriage, out of convenience or selfishness, out of singularity or callousness. The “kingdom of heaven” is the real motive that must lie in virginity. A truly virgin soul decides on this state in order not to be hindered by any worries in the service of God and in order to be able to work more for Christ in any form. She consecrates all her love exclusively to Christ. Whoever wishes to lead such a life must first examine whether he has the natural and supernatural ability to do so. The Savior not only invites, but also urges caution. But if one feels the strength to do so, God will already grant the necessary graces, provided one prays fervently for them.

Although Christ addresses all people in the parable of the ten virgins, the Church applies it in a special way to virginity (Mt 25, ı. Evan

2. the evangelical council on virginity

gelium at virgin feasts). The higher bridehood is essential for virginity. It is said of a holy virgin: “This is the prudent virgin” (Responsory of the Office of the Virgins). Prudence consists above all in the vigilance with which a virgin protects and preserves her spousal love for Christ. The love-flame of virginity must not be lost through negligence. Temptations or pardons often come at a time when one does not expect it. Therefore, the admonition is: Be ready!

Of all men who have been resurrected and transfigured with the body, the Savior says: “They shall not marry nor be given in marriage. For they are like the angels of Gortes in heaven” (Mt 22:30). Such an angelic way of life is attributed by the Fathers of the Church, especially St. Ambrose, to the virgin souls on earth (De Virg. lib. I init., reading in the Office of the Virgins). On the feast of St. Aloisius, the Church liturgically expresses that it sees in perfect purity a certain transfiguration of man.

Virginity is not infrequently referred to by ecclesiastical writers as a precious stone, as a precious treasure. This can be traced back to a parable in the Gospel, which is read at some virgin feasts (Mt 13, 44). This pearl is often hidden from the earthly eye and is seen only by a few in

recognized in all its beauty.

II. virginity as a unique gift of salvation

3. the brenntliche relationship in the Geheinmissen Christi

The relationship that exists between man and God must not be dry or cold; God has bestowed the richest benefits on man throughout history. Should it not light up in the hearts of people? Already in the Old Covenant it was imagined that the relations between man and God were inspired by a special love, by a spousal love. The people of the Old Covenant were a chosen people, and so the love of God had to be an intimate one. This love found its first fulfillment in the incarnation of the Son of God. The Word became flesh. The divine nature and the human nature united in the second person of the Trinity. This union the mystics have called a spousal one. The human nature is the bride and the divine nature is the bridegroom. Over this nuptial relationship hovered the love of the Holy Spirit, as St. Bernard so enthusiastically describes.

Mary, the Blessed Virgin, is the new Eve, and Christ, the Son of God, is the new Adam. At the time of the wedding at Cana, as the Fathers of the Church testify, Mary was married as the new Eve to Christ as the new Adam. The new wine of Cana symbolizes the love that unites the King and the Queen. Full of bridal happiness

3. the spousal relationship in the mysteries of Christ

Mary travels through the world, as Psalm 44 tells us, and her kind love calls out to a large following.

The general teaching is that Christ acquired the church as a bride on the cross. From the wound of Jesus’ heart, the Church came forth, just as Eve was once formed from Adam’s rib. The intimacy of this love, which flows back and forth between Christ and the Church, surpasses all ideas of a

bridal love on earth. In the highest love, in the blood, this new covenant has been made. The union that is established in the sacrificial offering is the deepest.

On the feast of Epiphany we pray: “Today the Church has united herself to the heavenly Bridegroom”. Two mysteries are referred to in which the liturgy sees a spousal relationship: To the wedding at Cana and to the baptism of Jesus at the Jordan. What was foreshadowed at Epiphany was fulfilled at Pentecost: With his fire of love, the Holy Spirit united Christ, the Head, to his mystical body, to the Church. Thus, in the greatest mysteries, one constantly speaks of a spousal relationship.

Man is included in this spousal relationship. For man is a member of the mystical body of Christ. Already by grace the human soul is a bride of Christ. This bridehood is to be increased by the love of virginity. In virginity, the virgin becomes a bride of Christ with her outstanding love.

II. virginity as a unique gift of salvation

The virgin, in her spousal relationship with Christ, is an image of the Church, an image of Mary. It is precisely the Virgin who is first aware that she herself cannot worthily correspond to such a choice. But the Bridegroom inclines toward her in extraordinary benevolence. A virgin is so completely receptive to the extraordinary grace and she surrenders herself completely in the love of the Holy Spirit and lets herself be lifted up by His wings. She is drawn into all the mysteries of Christ and experiences the inexpressible happiness of her virginity.

4. the recommendation by the apostle Paul

In Corinth, Christians were arguing about whether marriage or virginity was the greater thing. Therefore, the apostle Paul wrote to them, “Concerning virgins, I have no commandment from the Lord. But one counsel I give you” (1 Cor 7:24). “He who marries his virgin does right, and he who does not marry her does better.” “I wish that you were all like myself. But each one has his gift from God. So I say to the unmarried: It is well for them to remain as I am.” “The virgin is mindful of what is the Lord’s, that she may be holy in body and soul.” The apostle declares that both marriage and virginity are a gift of God, admittedly distinguished in greatness. Those who feel inclined to marry may choose marriage. However, in the cares and joys of the family, one must not

rise up. Virgins are freer for the service of God and for the care of the eternal. It would not be right to avoid marriage out of fear of sacrifice. The motive of virginity is undivided love for God, a higher degree of perfection. Paul is not merely the counselor, but also the model of virginity. The Holy Spirit has inspired him with this. In this spirit he encourages Christians to a certain heroism. As an ideal, he places virginity before our eyes. Even those Christians who do not fully grasp it can imitate it in some way. Thus, Paul also exhorts spouses, with mutual consent, to be abstinent for a time in order to devote themselves to prayer. He advises widows not to enter into a second marriage in order to have more time for good works. But everything must be done voluntarily in love for Christ.

The Christian community of Corinth is a bride whom Paul has married to Christ. It would be a breach of faith if the

Christians would follow the false prophets. Heaven jealously guards that the bride gives all her love to the divine Savior. The apostle calls for this love and faithfulness: “I am jealous for you with God’s jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, as a chaste virgin to present Christ to you” (2 Cor ıı, z). Similarly, every virgin soul is consecrated to Christ and may not let anything detract from this undivided devotion

II. virginity as a unique gift of salvation

Let it be brought to you. Even if it is chosen, it must not become proud because of this. Paul warns against this pride: “Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord. For not he who commends himself is approved, but he whom the Lord commends” (2 Cor 10:18).

Of the Church, the bride of Christ, the apostle says: “Christ gave himself for the Church, that he might sanctify it, cleansing it with the bath of water by means of the word of life, that he might present the Church to himself glorious, without spot or blemish, and without any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Eph 5:25). The Virgin, who is a member of the Mystical Body of Christ, and therefore of His “flesh and bones” like the Church, is an image of the Church, even more so than a married woman, since she has been drawn closer to Him by Christ in mystical marriage.

The Virgin, who renounces all sexual activity, has offered her love in consecration to Christ. In an excellent sense she fulfills the wish of the apostle Paul: “I beseech you … that you present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to Go/f, so that your worship may be filled with the Spirit” (Rom ız, ı). Of course, not merely the body, but

likewise the soul is consecrated to God in chaste love. Thus, it also seeks to heed the other admonition: “Transform yourselves by renewing your minds, testing what is the will of God, what is good, what is well-deserved, and what is not.

be due and perfect”. This sacrificial consecration of body and soul, accomplished “in the travail” of the Holy Spirit, the Virgin does not take back throughout her life.

5 The Revelation to the Apostle John

In the Secret Revelation it says: “Behold the Lamb on Mount Sion, and with him 144,000 who have his name and his Father’s name written on their foreheads. … And I heard a voice out of heaven … they sang as a new song before the throne … and no one could learn the song but those 144000 who are bought from the earth. …These are they who have not defiled themselves with women. They are virgins. They are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They are purchased from among men as firstfruits for God and the Lamb, and in their mouth was no deceit invented. For they are without blemish” (Rev 14:1). The scholars of God distinguish there two choirs, one on earth and the other in heaven, the singers in heaven and the disciples on earth. These 144,000 men on earth did not commit any sin of unchastity, but consecrated themselves completely to Christ, the Lamb, in virgin love. From heaven they were encouraged in this. Two tasks in particular presuppose the heroism of a virginal following of Jesus: the cultus in the temple and the struggle in life. These virgin souls are the pardoned and chosen ones, a selection or

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IT. Virginity as a unique gift of salvation

Blossom, the firstfruits who live immaculately and are simple and straight, faithful and honest. Through purity and love of truth, through confessional courage and martyr spirit, they become worthy to be the bodyguard of the Lamb, the army of volunteers, who also practice evangelical counsels in the following of Jesus. Victory belongs to these chaste fighters.

On the Feast of the Innocent Children these texts are connected with two other sentences of the Revelation: “They stood before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white garments and palms in their hands” (Rev 7:9, 6:11). What is said of the blessed in heaven in general, came to the virgin souls in a special way: because of their innocence they shone in white garments! For those who have transgressed, purification is possible again through the grace of redemption: “In the blood of the Lamb they washed their robes and made them white” (Rev 7:14, 22:14). The virgins who have shed their virgin blood in martyrdom become most like the Lamb.

“The marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.” “Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s spouse” (Rev. 19:7, 21:9). The sacrificed Lamb and the Church are brought together in the house of the heavenly Father for eternal life communion. In the Virgin, this Church, this Bride, is best represented and realized.

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6. the power and solemnity of the council

“I saw the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven, adorned like a bride for her bridegroom, and I heard a strong voice from the throne saying, ‘Set the tent with the people.’ He will dwell with them. They will be his people” (Rev. 21:2. Zach. 8:8). The house or temple, the church or heaven, in which this covenant is made and the wedding is celebrated, is the home of the virgins.

6. the power and solemnity of the council

We do have very few references to celibacy or abstinence among the Jews and pagans: among the Roman vestal virgins during the period of service, among the priests of Israel during the temple service, when accompanying the ark of the covenant, when conducting battles. However, nothing was known about the actual ideal of virginity. Now virginity is taught by Christ and by John and most clearly and in detail by Paul. The virgin life is also practically shown i” personal examples: Christ Himself, the Most Blessed Virgin, Joseph and the two Johns and then also Paul. For the preservation of virginity, God even worked miracles. In the mysteries of Jesus, the spousal relationship shines again and again. In the treasure that the Savior brings from heaven, there is really something new that surprises the world (Mt ı3, 52). Virginity is a new gift from heaven,

which the world did not know. From the beginning it revealed a mighty power. Something heavenly transfiguration rests in her and therefore she reaches beyond all sexual. One time she is the dysentery of the aliens and the other time the adornment of the women. But

always she floats in a mystical sphere, which is far away from the world.

It is striking that the beauty of virginity is often contrasted with the difficulties of marriage. At the same moment that Christ and Paul proclaim and inculcate the indissolubility of marriage, they point to the ideal of a voluntary virgin life. The example of virginity is meant to increase the power of fidelity and abstinence. In the first letter to the Corinthians, one clearly senses that Paul wants to strengthen the chastity of single youth with the example of virginity. The love, which was dragged down into the swamps, is to be spiritualized again and directed to heaven. When man sees the freedom of the children of God, the longing to break away from the slavery of passion awakens in him. If one wanted to confront the power of the sensual urges, one had to go into battle with heroic courage, with supernatural strength. Even in the ancient world, people suspected that they would only be victorious in a difficult battle if they armed themselves with abstinence or purity. The sensual grasps the human being the deepest and widest. That is why a

ideal that calls forth every fiber of man to enthusiasm. For this reason, virginity has been so solemnly and forcefully proclaimed and modeled to the world.

With Christ, a new worship begins on earth. Already in the Old Covenant we find some provisions that want to ensure the purity of worship. The church, which Christ founded, is a spotless bride. The supernatural motherhood is virginally transfigured. Therefore, virginity corresponds to the piestly ideal, not as a divine commandment, but as an evangelical

counsel and an ecclesiastical obligation. The deepest mysteries of the church shine in spousal love. The deepest can be extracted from the human soul only if it is ready for virginal sacrifices. In the supernatural sphere, man must allow himself to be led and guided by the Holy Spirit. Virginity broadens the receptivity to it. The readiness for the coming of grace is the special quality of wise virgins. Virginity is already oriented toward heaven in the earth valley. From there, the great promises also shine towards her. Should we therefore be surprised that virginity was so highly honored in Christianity from the very beginning.

II.

THE ECCLESIASTICAL IDEAL OF VIRGINITY

r. The full and original beauty of the ideal

In the ancient ideal of virginity, physical virginity already appeared to be very precious. Its preciousness is particularly prominent because God miraculously preserved this virginity in Mary at the birth of Jesus. One liked to speak of the “closed spouse”, of the closed gate (Ez 44, 2). Later, before the consecration of virgins, one inquired whether this physical virginity still existed. This virginity was also the symbol of the higher.

Virginity presupposes perfect chastity. It is not merely celibacy, but renunciation of all voluntary sexual activity of any kind, that is, complete abstinence and purity. The bodily faculties are completely subjected to moral rule and these powers are put at the service of the religious-moral task. Perfect chastity is external and internal mastery of the sensory sphere, animated before a high moral-religious sentiment. According to the Christian view, the body also

belongs to the “Lord” (1 Cor 6:13), because it is a member of the mystical body of Christ. Since it is mystically connected with Christ, it may be separated from evil.

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1. the full and original beauty of the ideal

We must not let our carnality lead us into unfaithfulness (Rom 6:11). Chastity is a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22). It has always been a glory among Christians to preserve baptismal innocence in this very area. This was important because the beginning of religious virginity was derived from baptism. The spiritual rebirth from water and the Holy Spirit has a virginal character.

Perfect chastity becomes virginity only when it is practiced 4 for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven. Virginity is undivided devotion to God and special pardon of the chosen soul. This relationship of consecration, sacrifice and love for Christ is very often called mystical bridehood. According to St. Thomas, this virginity is a special virtue. It is a special and new form of belonging to God. The virgin belongs exclusively to Christ and seeks to realize the Kingdom of God, as fully as possible, in her own life and in the service of her fellow men.

First, the virgin was initiated into her state by the Church through a prayer, by the presentation of a veil, and subsequently by a formal “consecration of virgins”. Both legally and pneumatically, they were gozf consecrations, whom the Church cared for with extraordinary concern. These brides of Jesus Christ, who possessed a special inner dignity of grace, then enjoyed a high veneration. The Church

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they became so dear and adorable because they were cin image of their own virginity.

Guided by an evangelical counsel, the Virgin is no longer rooted to the earth, but is completely directed toward heaven. For the sake of Christ, she has “left everything” in spirit. After all, earthly things are transitory and time passes quickly. This is how Paul instructs the virgins. Detached from earthly attachments, they want to cling only to Christ. In their love for the bridegroom they feel the pilgrim, eschatological character of this life on earth. The bridegroom to whom they are engaged will soon come to take them to the heavenly wedding. In this mood, some virgins courageously and bravely took upon themselves the martyrdom for which they were prepared by the sacrifices of the virgin life. Through martyrdom, they become most like their bridegroom and reach the longed-for marriage feast of heaven most quickly.

2. the outstanding characteristics of the young virgin ideal

The soul that accepts celibacy only as a state of emergency does not yet possess virginity. It is not enough to send oneself into singlehood or to have a certain natural pleasure in it. Virginity must have the character of voluntariness. It must not remain accidental,

but it must be willed. One must consciously and freely decide to do so in order to offer a sacrifice to God or to consecrate oneself especially for God. God himself does not want to force virginity, but to have it freely. In this sense,

too, it is a counsel and a gift. This free decision is guided by motives, which perfect chastity only elevates to virginity: For the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven! This virginity belongs to the supernatural sphere. It springs from a supernatural conviction of faith and is directed toward a supernatural ideal of grace.

Virgin souls offer God the “first love” (Rev 2:4), the untouched and fresh flower of their virginity. They are also considered “first fruits” (Jet 2:3) because Christ chose them before all others. The pure morning gift in its spring fragrance thus resembles the firstfruits, which in the Old Covenant were carried to the temple and awakened the pleasure and favor of God. In the breath of youthful beauty, as it came forth from God’s Creator’s hand, the virgins are placed back into Christ’s hands as consecration gifts, as “firstfruits of creatures” (Jas 1:18).

According to Paul, the virgin, “who is only concerned about pleasing God,” has an “undivided heart” (1Cot 7:33). She does not let herself be captured by earthly concerns. Her full and entire strength, her full and entire

She wants to consecrate her whole life to Christ, her Bridegroom, alone. Therefore, half measures should not occur. No undue cares and attachments should enter their soul from the world. In a very special way, they belong to God body and soul. In the face of the world, they must also keep themselves spiritually “intact.” The virgin state is the “better”, that is, a better means to perfection than the other states.

The virgin soul is open upward, receptive to the heavenly goods. Christ takes possession of it and wants to fill it completely with graces and virtues. This is precisely the secret that nothing “creaturely” may come between the spousal soul and the heavenly Bridegroom. The spousal union is immediate and exclusive. Christ is jealous that no other speck of love intervene (2 Cor ı1,2). Christ fills her with all the goods she can desire. Immediacy and exclusivity are the conditions for heavenly completion, fulfillment and perfection.

The devotion and consecration would not be undivided and perfect if it were calculated only for a certain time. The virgin souls have given Christ “words” which are not “taken back” (Is 45,23). If also the sacramental indissolubility of marriage has a different character, one said

but also with virginity parallel from a certain indissolubility. In the original church, the dispensation from virginal vows is soon tightened and made more difficult. To have something better and higher than Christ for a bridegroom is not possible at all. Therefore, whoever consecrates himself to Christ as a bride with all his heart cannot do otherwise than eternally. That is why the Church prays constantly at the consecration of virgins for perseverance, for the eternal duration of the bridehood.

3. the praise of virginity through the ancient scriptures of the church

The teachings with which the Holy Scriptures recommend virginity have been explained in more detail in the early Church. If Pope Clement of Rome (} c. 97) probably did not

himself write the “two letters” to virgins which bear his name, he nevertheless possessed the reputation of having zealously advocated the ideal of virginity. “The virgins have assured themselves of a particularly glorious name.” Zgwatius, bishop of Antioch (} c. 114), wanted those virgins to be especially esteemed who offered their lives “priestly” or virginal for Christ. In the second century, the ideal of virginity had already been set forth in separate writings. From the later period we have a series of major treatises which constitute a coherent and unified body of teaching.

III The Ecclesiastical Ideal of Virginity

Tertullian says, “Virginity is a sure way to heaven.” Cyprian: “She is the daintiest flower in the garden of the Church, the more distinguished part in the flock of Christ. Through her blossoms the glorious fruitfulness of the Church.” Athanasius exclaims, “O virginity…. imperishable treasure and temple of God, dwelling place of the Holy Spirit, precious pearl, life of angels.” Ephrem: “O virginity, thou art that chariot all radiant with fire, on which a number of souls rise above all the vapors of the earth” (Coulin 18. Busenbaum 20).

In the West, Ambrose of Milan is the famous teacher of virginity, who was sought out from far away. “Virginity raises man above his own nature and makes him equal to the angels” (De Virg. lib. 2). In the Orient, Chrysostom was the apostle of virginity. “Virginity leaves every other state far behind. All honor is due to her. “Jerome, who explained the Scriptures in women’s circles both in Rome and in Bethlehem, writes: “The virgins and the abstainers adorn the jewels of the Church like the most beautiful gems” (Lib. 2. con. Jov). Augustine declares, “The joys proper to the virgins of Christ cannot be tasted by others.” Basil: “The origin of

virginity is in heaven.” Gregory of Nazianzus: “I delight in virgins as in the most beautiful stars of Christ.” Gregory of

Nissa: “Virginity gives people wings to take flight heavenward.”

The views expressed by the Fathers of the Church on virginity are reflected in the ecclesiastical prayers used by the Church on the feasts of virgins and at the consecration of virgins. Legend has it that the Apostle Matthew wrote a blessing which he pronounced over a king’s daughter and other virgins. On the feasts of the three holy virgins and martyrs, Caesilia, Agnes and Agatha, we see with what strong sayings virginity was defended and how high the enthusiasm for virginity had risen. The texts that can still be found today in the bishops’ book of blessings are like a hymn to virginity.

St. Thecla (Sept. 23), the patroness of virgin souls in the East, is said to have been another disciple of Paul. Of the four daughters of Philip the deacon, according to tradition, at least two consecrated themselves to the virginal ideal (Acts 21:9). Virgin souls also came from the noble house of Pope Clement. Not only in Corinth, but also in Rome and Smyrna, and in other Christian communities, the evan

gelish advice is followed by men and women. This is probably what the apostle John means, since he speaks of chosen virgins in the Gcheimen Revelation (Rev 14:3). Martha (July 29) and Petronilla (May 31) and Domitilla (May 12) are celebrated or mentioned in the church year.

Those who wanted to imitate Christ and the Mother of God in a special way should keep virginity. Virginity was considered a means of coming closer to God. From the middle of the second century, almost all priests were virgin men. Already pagans and Jews had the need to perfect the cultus with pure abstinence. For the beautification of the “Kingdom of God” virginity should flourish according to Christ’s advice. The ecclesiastical and priestly that lay in virginity inspired multitudes of virgins. Individuals perhaps also sought in virginity a substitute for the fact that they could not become priests. The incense of love that virginity brought to the altar of Christ was highly valued as a perfect sacrifice. Virginity was considered the best means to make great progress in perfection. Those who possessed the moral power of virginity were also prepared for martyrdom. Virgin souls did not shrink from this, because in martyrdom their heavenly longing only reached its goal, the heavenly wedding, more quickly. Even

the pagan physician Galienus was struck by how large this virginal elite was among Christians. The ecclesiastical liturgy chose two models from the second century, the sisters Pudentiana (May 19) and Praxedis (July 21).

Virginity includes not only bodily integrity, of which the pagan vestal virgins also boasted, but also spiritual integrity.

According to Tertulian, they were virgins in “honor of the flesh of Christ.” Virginity was not merely an intention or resolution, but an actual promise or vow, partly made privately and partly made publicly. Initiation was originally very simple: the presentation of the veil with a prayer of blessing. The “brides” or “maidens” of Christ were considered equal in innocence to the newly baptized, and therefore prayers have been said for them in the Canon of the Mass. The virgins were soon granted titles of honor and privileges. The most famous were St. Agnes (Jan. 21), who was elevated to the patroness of virgins in the Occident. In the ecclesiastical year we are reminded of a number of virgins and martyrs from the third century: Martina (Jan 31), Cecilia (z2 Nov), Apollonia (Feb 9), Agatha (Feb 5), Priska (Jan 18), Emerentiana (z3 Jan) Barbara (Dec 4), Susanna (Aug 11), Balbina (March 31).

The ecclesiastical institute of virginity attained the height of popularity in the fourth century. One

counted not only hundreds, but many thousands of virgin souls. Parents often hid their daughters from St. Ambrose so that he would not inspire them to virginity by his speeches. Pope Liberius consecrated the sister of St. Ambrose, Marcellina, !to virginity in St. Peter’s Church in Rome. Irene, sister of Pope Damasus, also had herself included in the throngs of virgins. The mother of Emperor Constantine is said to have served the virgins herself as “handmaid of handmaids” at a banquet in Jerusalem. There was an explicit distinction between virgins who had only made the simple promise of perfect chastity and virgins who had received virginity consecration from the bishop in the church.

Incidentally, it was necessary to prepare for solemn admission to the Church through a period of examination. In Rome, the 25th year was required for admission. In some places, however, the probationary period lasted longer, even up to the 40th year. The basic idea of the consecration of virgins, which was given mainly on Epiphany, during Easter week and on Peter and Paul, was the mystical marriage with Christ. The form was neatly simple: address by the bishop, renewal or announcement of the promise, presentation of the veil and prayers of blessing. The names of the virgins were entered in ecclesiastical lists and they were given the hundredfold fruit of the Gospel.

um promised. After priests and deacons, they were given a place next to deaconesses and widows. Whoever enticed a “consecrated virgin” to infidelity had to face the punishment of God and the church. If they became unfaithful of their own accord, they had to go to the penitents. In order to keep them pure in their “angelic life”, they were advised certain rules of life: Mortifications and fasting, especially abstinence from meat and wine, staying away from inns and public baths, simplicity in hair care, dark and modest clothing, almsgiving, praying the Psalms, reading the Scriptures, practicing virtue through industriousness, *etc.* Some were involved in processions and ecclesiastical chants and had to assist in the administration of baptism or in catechesis. Most, however, lived in the family. Of course, the family home was supposed to provide a certain seclusion from the world. At the beginning of the fourth century, several more virgins were crowned with martyrdom: Christina (July 24), Margaretha (July 20), Justina (Sept. 26), Lucia (Dec. 13),

Dorothea (Feb. 6), Rufina and Sekunda (July 10), Ursula (zı Oct.), Catherine (Nov. 25), Bibiana (Dec. 2).

Towards the fifth century the development took a great turn. The virgins now founded monastic communities and these groups soon gained the upper hand. The flocks of virgins, which had been

were still respectable and enjoyed an honorable position. Four daughters of Emperor Arcadius lived among them, and at the court of Emperor Theodosius in Byzantium all honor was paid to virgins. It had long been insisted that it was not the parents who chose their daughters for virginity, but that the virgins themselves chose their virginal state and voluntarily took upon themselves the obligations. The virginal dress was, as it were, the dress of Mary, and the virgins formed the first following of the Mother of God. Two great saints gave great prestige to the virgin life in the world: Empress Pulcheria of Constantinople (f 453) and the patroness of Paris, Genovefa (} 5o2). In France at this time, Germana was martyred by the Vandals for virginity.

The ceremonies of virginity consecration were extended in the following centuries and there were even several forms of mass for the celebration. In the prayers, the ideal of virginity was described, and then with great fervor pleaded for the grace of steadfastness and perseverance. From ıo0th to 12th century two different rites of virginity consecration existed for the monastic women and for the virgins in the world. After the vow was taken in feudal form, not only a veil, but also a ring and a wreath were handed over. Among the prince’s daughters there were many noble souls,

who wanted to preserve virginity under difficult circumstances. In the 7th century, Maxellendis was stabbed to death in Solesmes for this reason. Popular are the two exemplary maids: Zita of Italy (+ 1272) and Notburga in the Tyrol (} 1313).

The bridal mysticism that was cultivated in women's monasteries during the Middle Ages is proof that the ideals of virginity still largely dominated religious life. Through the mendicant orders, however, the ideal of poverty came to the fore. If the groups of Oblates and the Third Orders also accepted married women, eternal and perfect chastity in the world was powerfully strengthened precisely in these circles. The humanistic aspirations, which strongly emphasized the corporeal, were less favorable to the virginal ideal. Since the 16th century, the consecration of virgins in the form of the pontifical was a rarity both in the monasteries and in the world. Even St. Charles Borromeo did not quite succeed in reawakening it in the monasteries. However, the book of Father Busenbaum, The Lily Among Thorns (1660), testifies to us that, in spite of all difficulties, virginity was cultivated in the world outside. We point to only a few examples: Catherine of Cardona, Italy (f 1577), Germana Cousin of Toulouse (} 1601), Rosa of Lima in South America (f1617), Marina Escobar in Spain (f 1633), Marianna

de Paredes, the Lily of Quito (F 1645), Armella of Brittany (} 1671), Helena Piscopi of Padua (} 1684), Agnes Pfeiffer of

Finthen near Mainz (} 1754), Maria Eustella of Saintes, France (} 1842).

Since 1868, Abbot Gudranger of Solesmes has endeavored not only to receive vows in the monasteries with solemn vows, especially among the Benedictine nuns, but also to confer a Benediction or Consecration, the ancient consecration of virgins. In some monasteries it has been reintroduced. In 1927 it was declared that under present conditions it could cause difficulties if one wanted to dare something similar among the virgins in the world (A. A.S. XIX. 1927, p. 138). This calls for caution. In fact, however, there is a movement, especially in France, which wants to make the old ideals accessible again to the virgins in the world. The efforts are favored by the canonization of the ız-year-old girl Maria Goretti, who has become a martyr of chastity, a modern Agnes.

5. guarding against exaggeration and discouragement

It has already been said that the Fathers of the Church were too effusive in their praise of virginity. But we must not overlook the fact that in this ideal at that time the striving for perfection shone out publicly.

5. guarding against exaggeration and discouragement

tete. The ecclesiastical writers did not pass by the difficulties in silence, but they also spoke of the failure of many, even of “fallen virgins” who had to do penance. The virgin souls were given special honors because they were also showered with ridicule and contempt from other quarters. In the many external and internal dangers they needed protection and strength. The martyr spirit had vigilantly preserved their purity. Many virgins did not die merely for the faith, but they sacrificed their lives specifically for the virtue of eternal and perfect chastity.

The virgin ideal is based above all on the virgin birth of Christ. The heresies that obscured the virginity of Christ and His Mother always meant an attack on the virgin life of Christians. Periods of flares have always relegated the ideal of virginity to the background. Some virgins who got spiritually carried away and wanted to force heavenly apparitions and higher voices became unfaithful to their ideal in some way. It was not less bad when these and those tried to mystify certain carnal desires.

Virgins who had wrong ideas about the connection between body and soul soon went to extremes or went astray. The corporeal does not come from the devil, as one would think.

heretics have said. According to Paul, the body is a temple of God, before which we must have reverence. But we must not think that with a beautiful resolution all temptations and dangers are already overcome. Human nature is wounded by original sin and the weaknesses show themselves not least in the sexual sphere. Whoever wants to preserve the virginal ideal must therefore ask for special help from grace.

The virginal ideal never leads to contempt for marriage. It is precisely in the preface of virginity consecration that the dignity of the holy sacrament of marriage is defended. Those who have a correct conception of marriage will also have reverence for virginity. The Council of Trent stated that virginity is superior to marriage. This is true if we compare the two statuses. However, a mother can still personally surpass a virgin in perfection.

Aware of the difficulties of the virgin life, the Church has surrounded virginity with precautionary rules: Maturity of age, ascetical exercises, spiritual guidance, certain detachment from the world, social and charitable duties, punishment of the unfaithful, ecclesiastical ban against seducers, *etc.* Thus, an actual ecclesiastical institute, a religious institution, had been created, into whose framework the virgins had to fit. The instantaneous enthusiasm and the lukewarm

6. sympathy with the old ideal and imitation of it

Tight reins had to be put on the fickleness of the virginity. Because independence and worldliness entail great dangers, virginity was placed within the protective walls of the monastery. With the flight from the world, of course, not everything is done. Usually, however, virginity could be

preserved in the world only if it was promoted by a favorable religious sphere and accompanied by a very zealous striving for perfection. After the experience of history one must not say: It is easy! But the assertion that it is not possible would also be wrong.

6. sympathy with the old ideal and imitation of it

Some theologians say that the ideal of ancient virginity can be attributed only to those virgins who have received the ecclesiastical consecration of virginity. Since this consecration is given today to only a few convent women and perhaps to a few virgins in the world, the number of “virgin souls” would be extraordinarily small. The ecclesiastical consecration of virgins is a prerequisite before someone can be called a “consecrated virgin” in the liturgical and canonical sense. However, the ideal of virginity is shared by all those who have consecrated themselves as brides for eternity in the monastery through vows or in the world through personal devotion to Christ.

III. the ecclesiastical ideal of virginity

What about those virgins who have lost physical virginity for some reason? Even if they themselves were not to blame, the loss cannot be made up for. All complaining and lamenting does not help. Physical virginity is the material element that should not break our spiritual-religious aspirations. The bishops today will hardly make sure that the physical integrity is present. Consecration of virgins is said to have been given to virgins of whom it was known that this element was lacking. Of course, this must not make the virgins indifferent. Otherwise, the spiritual attitude would be very deficient.

Whoever commits a grave sin against chastity, even if only in thoughts and desires, has forfeited spiritual virginity, even if physical integrity is still there. Spiritual integrity represents a formal element for the foundation of virginity. However, St. Thomas Aquinas teaches that the virtue of virginity can be regained through contrition and penance (S. th. 2, 2 qu ı52 a 3). There must, of course, revive the resolute determination to remain a bride of Christ in full and lasting purity and chastity until the end of life.

Mary Magdalene (currently July), who according to tradition is the great “sinner” (Luk 7:36), who washed the Savior’s feet

6. sympathy with the old ideal and imitation of it

Martha’s sister, whose feast is celebrated eight days later, is not classified as a virgin by the liturgy, but is called a “penitent”. It is therefore difficult to call a known and public sinner against chastity a “virgin”. At the feast, however, she appears as the bride of Christ, who seeks the Savior in ardent love and who is pardoned by the Risen Lord in a special way. Something of the ideal will therefore also be granted to the penitents.

Even if a widow is pious, she can no longer become a virgin. In the Mass for Holy Widows, however, we encounter texts that refer to the mystical marriage with Christ. It is not even demanded that widowhood be given the official conditions of primitive Christianity. One imagines, then, that after the death of her husband, the widow has returned as much as possible to the virginal ideal in a certain sense. Virgin inwardness and spousal love of Christ revived in her widowhood.

IV. THE APPPOINTMENT

TO A VIRGIN WAY OF LIFE

I. The heavenly election

The call to live a virgin life comes from Christ. Not only the monastics, but also the daughters in the world are invited to it. The evangelical advice is universal and maintains its validity in all times. So also today there is a virginity in the world. If Christ advises and calls to it, people cannot simply advise against it and deny any possibility of calling.

A virgin must not expect Christ to bring her the calling by an apparition or by an audible voice. The call comes to the soul like a silent grace. One does not make this vocation oneself and one does not receive it from other people. God must give it. This gracefulness of the vocation is emphasized in a special way by the prefession of consecration. Earthly, so much speaks against virginity. If it did not possess a power of grace, it could not overcome all obstacles. Supernaturally, virgins can hear this call of grace. A virgin writes to us: “Christ solicited my love at an early age!”

The appeal comes under ordinary circumstances by the practical circumstances

1. the heavenly election

By physical, psychological and spiritual disposition, by natural and supernatural qualities of character, by personal, family or social circumstances, in general by manifold life fates. Some virgins know how to interpret this correctly: “God led me my own, but joyful ways.” “From my past life I can see that I have a complete vocation to the virginal state. “

A voice of God also reveals itself from the needs of the world: the need for a virginal example, special social duties of single people, obstacles in marriage, *etc.* God expects at least an elite to recognize this call. “There should be some daughters who choose virginity in the world from the outset,” says a social leader, “because they see in it a task assigned by God. “

Finally, the Church also calls out in the name of Christ: “Come!” Three times and ever more insistently she sings the call out into the world at the consecration of virgins. What is the response of the brave souls: “We follow with glad hearts. ” The ecclesiastical vocation is addressed to the individual and is undoubtedly audible. If a daughter is formally called by the Church, she may also be sure that her virginity is the will of God. The Church declares in the consecration, “We now choose her.” So she is one of the elect,

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1V. The vocation to a virgin way of life

Who have taken hold of the grace of God’s mercy.

2. the voluntariness and the motives of the choice

An elderly lady, who was orphaned at an early age and had to take care of two brothers, explains in a letter: “So I was forced x# into this state.” We find many people who for some reason could not marry. Some are physically incapable and infirm or sickly, others psychologically peculiar or undesirable, the third family or socially disadvantaged, the fourth overly worldly shy or religiously scrupulous. It may also happen that the frivolous are taken before the pious, the outwardly handsome before the character-fest. Is there any value in these disappointed and embittered, these demoralized and intimidated, these weak and disadvantaged, fretting themselves almost to death and accusing fate? They do better to make a virtue out of necessity. It is precisely these incapable and handicapped ones that Christ mentions, since he speaks of virginity (Mt 19,12). So the evangelical advice is to offer them help and comfort.

In the world, there are also proud hags and despisers of marriage who have rejected marriage for purely earthly reasons. Although these young ladies were not forced into celibacy by necessity, they do not possess evangelical virginity at all. The celibacy, even if it is voluntarily acquired

is not virginity by a long shot. It would only become so through higher motives. This virginal attitude is lacking in many unmarried girls. A connoisseur of the circumstances can tell us: “It seems to me that very few daughters will choose virginity in the world from the outset out of voluntary resolution and idealism. It would therefore be wrong to call all single women “virgin souls”.

This situation shows how important motivation is. What was not desired at first must become a free decision. What was done or accepted merely out of earthly considerations must be lifted up into a religious, nuptial sphere. Christ has not only called to virginity those virgins who are unfit for marriage or have not been desired for marriage. In fact, the evangelical advice is primarily directed to the normal and healthy, to the marriageable and desirable virgins. However, there is no obstacle even for those persons who are forced to be celibate because of an emergency situation. However, for the sake of the “Kingdom of Heaven”, one must decide with higher intentions and of one’s own free will to keep perfect chastity permanently and eternally and to sanctify it through spousal love towards Christ. In this way, celibacy can be idealized by the virginal disposition in unconstrained free choice. The freedom that virginal consecration gives

The first condition, therefore, is not necessarily the ability or possibility to marry, but the free and firm will to take upon oneself the virginal obligations.

3. the timely statement

How do the religious girls think about virginity? Because they have not married, they believe that they are in “young virginity”. Most of them know nothing about the ideal of virginity. For them, being celibate and chaste also means being “virgin. They do not distinguish between virginity and virginity, between perfect chastity and virginity. Among these “virgins” there are three groups: Some like to have all the doors still open. Of these, someone says, “Many just wait to see if, who, when and how” The others don’t have time to get married. They are occupied by a profession or a task. They do not think about anything else. The third ones have in mind to be single. They cheerfully say so when asked. However, it could be dangerous to chase a “special happiness” into their kitchen. All of these young ladies have not made a definite resolution to preserve perfect chastity throughout life, renouncing all marriage under any circumstances. Thus, for the ideal of virginity, the conscious and intentional eternal duration of perfect chastity is lacking. We want therefore

3. the timely statement

The fact that she is a virgin does not diminish the value of this perfect chastity in the present state. However, her religious life lacks the quality and merits of virginity in the narrower sense.

There they apologize: We did not know that we should still make a special decision. There one explains: One has advised us against binding ourselves somehow by a vow. Thus, the clarification of the religious character of the situation would be necessary. One should not simply piously accept the unmarried state, but one must make something great out of it. It must be religiously and mystically permeated and consecrated. One should not let the circumstances be imposed on one from the outside without inwardly working them out and using them for the higher. Celibacy is not only an opportunity to do more in a profession or apostolate. It must also become a means of attaining higher perfection in religious life. With celibacy, the ideal of virginity is not readily given. Misses should learn the beauty of virginity. A virgin thanks us for such teachings, “Because we were enlightened about it at a fairly young age, we have, with God’s grace, chosen the ideal of virginity ourselves and considered it a great ideal state. “

Certainly it is possible to inspire the girls too early for this ideal. Then dislocate

they get themselves into an attitude which they later regret. However, a touch of youthfulness, which so finely befits virginity, should still be present. Fearfulness must not prevent one from offering a fresh gift to God at the right time. The statement can be made too late. Then the spinster's celibacy may become religiously dry or dull. A little more zest, enthusiasm and vigor would do so well. Older virgins occasionally raise the sharp reproach that they have been deprived of the most beautiful things and kept from the highest. No doubt, it requires a certain maturity until one can practically estimate and measure what a virgin life requires and means. It is not necessary to commit oneself at the first step. The time of preparation can be prolonged. However, a decision must be made at some point. Between the ages of 25 and 40, most people should know what they want and are capable of in the future. Of course, one must be aware of the consequences of the decision. A virgin remarks: "In my opinion, it takes an extraordinary amount to consciously choose the ideal of virginity in the world in advance. "

What is the goal and content of the statement ? The virgin resolves to renounce marriage and to preserve perfect chastity for life. She places this spiritual gift on the altar of Christ and the Holy Spirit.

land raises her to be his bride. This formal decision is a very personal and voluntary act of virginal consecration and Christ sanctions it with graces and powers of the Holy Spirit. This consecration can take various forms. It does not have to be a legal commitment from the beginning.

4. the wise approach to the choice of stand

A young lady who talks about the ideal of virginity usually meets with resistance. If there were only a momentary enthusiasm, then the environment already ensures that it is cooled down for the time being. The calm equanimity endures that tests are imposed on it. During this time it will become clear whether prejudices and biases play a part. If the conception of virginity is somewhat one-sided or imperfect, it must be purified by sacrifice and instruction.

Without light and power from heaven, the matter is not feasible. Therefore, it is natural that the candidates must pray fervently. Mary, the Virgin Mother, and the virgin saints of the Church will not abandon their favorites and imitators. Whoever prays fervently and constantly at the very beginning will already secure graces for the later difficulties. Today it is generally advised not to make any important decision in life without first making a spiritual retreat. In the face of the last

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IV. The vocation to a virgin way of life

Things become more serious and clear. Of virginity, above all, it can be said that it is not flesh and blood that will reveal it, but the Father who is in heaven (Mt 16:17).

Only the inward virgin is capable of being a bride of Jesus Christ. If she does not love solitude, she is exposed to too many dangers. This seclusion slowly detaches from the world and also promotes humility, the spirit of sacrifice and collection. In the temptations of the world, a person cannot walk as a virgin if he has not attained a certain independence. The resolution, which should be permanent and firm, must have perseverance as its guarantor. These are only a few indications of the characteristics that the character should have.

It will be difficult for the virgin to judge herself. Therefore, she must seek a counselor, as is desired by all ascetic writers. Of course, the virgins complain that the guides of the soul are not so numerous, who are taken for the virginal ideal of the world. But this does not hurt if these consultations also become a touchstone. The virgins should not forget that today in the Church we do not have a perfect legal institution that regulates the circumstances. By the way, a mystical ideal does not have to become a juridical matter for the time being. Much depends on the concrete circumstances, which can be quite different from person to person. A virgin

dedicates the honorable sentence to her advisors: “I was granted a grace that should not be underestimated. In my life’s journey I found understanding priests who guided me with wisdom and certainty through the difficulties. “

5. the solemnity of the private vows

Some virgins in the world are reluctant to make vows. Perhaps they have also been warned against making a vow of chastity. For this reason, we first mention other forms of vows. Christ already sees it when the silent resolution springs up in the heart. The more intimate is the love with which this intention is permeated, the more pleasing it is before God. Through the promise, the intention emerges from the heart and ascends to heaven. If one wants to give emphasis to a promise, to make it more serious and pious and definite, many speak of vows. Because virginity is an evangelical counsel that goes beyond Christian duties, it can be offered as a free gift. It undoubtedly also means a sacrifice, since we have to obtain it.

The vows are not only more solemn, but they also say something more in terms of content. Through the consecration of prayer we separate a gift from the earthly and human and give it to God as our property. Virginity is a

very personal and very intimate offering, a very particular and very great sacrifice. Through this offering, the Virgin belongs to Christ in a special way, and through it she wants to promote the glory of God through an extraordinary means. Like incense, such a prayer rises before the face of

God. Is it not a beautiful thing to offer virginity to Christ in such an act of consecration?”

What is the Savior’s response to this prayer of consecration? Invisibly, Christ expresses his pleasure and accepts the consecration gift. With his graces, which he sends down to the heart, we hope, he raises the virgin soul to the bride. In goodness and mercy he wants to make her happy as a bridegroom with heavenly goods. He sends the Holy Spirit to bless and consecrate the bride with gifts. So there is also a consecration that comes from above and goes out from heaven. The Virgin is initiated into the heavenly mysteries through graces and illuminations. Is it not a consecrating moment when Christ gives all His heavenly love to a virgin through graces or through the Eucharist?

The consecration of perfect chastity to Christ is therefore like a mystical betrothal. The virgin has been preparing for it for a long time and she has been longing for it. Should the feast not be solemnized now? It would be good not only to say the consecration prayer orally, but also to put it in writing. Even if it is done in secret and

6. the vow of virginity

In private, so that no one can notice it, she performs the consecration before an altar or before an image of Christ, on a holy day, in a festive mood and full of heartfelt devotion. The solemnity also casts the rays back on one’s own heart, so that the spousal love does not diminish even when the time of the sacrifice comes.

Such a consecration gift can also be offered by the Virgin through the hands of a saint or the Mother of God. In order to avoid the danger of a vow, the virgin may expressly state that she does not want to “pledge herself under sin. The virgin may first limit such a consecration to a certain time. The renewal of the consecration is then always a special incentive. Perhaps in one place there are several virgin souls who encourage each other to this consecration. Such vows of consecration are occasionally offered together to Christ at the end of retreats or retreats.

6. the vow of virginity

A virgin in the world can be a bride of Christ in a broader sense without taking a vow. For the ascetic-mystical bridehood, it is sufficient to have a definite and firm resolution to maintain perpetual perfect chastity for the sake of the “Kingdom of Heaven.” Neither Christ nor the apostles speak of

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IV. The vocation to a virgin way of life

an actual vow. It can hardly be proved historically that a formal vow was demanded in the beginnings of church history. Even today we are not aware of any canonical regulation according to which private virginity would be bound to a vow. Of course, it is also not forbidden to consolidate virginity through a vow. The ascetic writers, however, strongly advise not to dare to make such a vow without first consulting the spiritual director.

With the vow, private virginity also enters the ecclesiastical legal sphere. The simple vow of virginity or perfect chastity is a marriage impediment in abeyance (c. 1058). Many priests advise virgins in the world to be content for the time being with a temporary vow. As long as it is not taken for perpetual or eternal, the bishop may still dispense with it. The vow of perpetual and perfect chastity, on the other hand, even if it is only of a private character, is reserved to the Apostolic See (c.1313. c.1309). The Church wants to protect virginity in a special way, as she has always done in history. Those who have committed themselves by a vow, whether temporal or perpetual, violate two virtues if they

sin: Chastity and the worship of God. Because some virgins got into confusion or trouble with their vow

6. the vow of virginity

The people who advise us are often warned to be careful about taking vows.

But it would not be right to discredit the vow of virginity at all. A vow is an act of worship. Certainly it binds the will. But the gift to God is greater if we sacrifice not only a work but also freedom to a certain extent. Through such a sacrifice, the virgin shows her gratitude for the many benefits she was allowed to receive from God precisely as a virgin soul. The vow can make virginity more decisive, meritorious and firm. The virgin then remains more resistant and faithful when difficulties, inhibitions and struggles come. The vow should grant new impulses and increase the spousal love. Whether this is to be expected in the individual case, the spiritual director must judge from the concrete circumstances.

A peculiarity of this vow of virginity is that it is detached from the other vows required in an order of women or in a congregation of sisters, from the vows of poverty and obedience. This also distinguishes the “virgin soul in the world” from those virgins who, according to the latest regulations, take a “religious vow” without leaving the world (institutum saeculare). For the cultivation of the virginal ideal, it is undoubtedly beneficial if

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IV. The vocation to a virgin way of life

The virgins should at least try to awaken in themselves the spirit of poverty and obedience. Since virginity is not a legal institution in the world today, the official guidelines are also

lacking for the time being in the ecclesiastical code. It is all the more necessary that virgin souls be well guided by priests.

In 1927, it was forbidden to consecrate virgins in the world according to the Episcopal Book of Blessings (Pontifical). However, upon special request, Rome may grant permission to individual bishops to perform this consecration of virgins under favorable conditions. In the rite of virgin consecration, the virgin at the beginning makes a promise to the bishop to keep her virginity forever. The present canon law does not say anything about the character of this promise. We consider it a public vow, the dispensation of which would be reserved to the pope (c.1308). According to the ancient view, however, the bond of the “consecrated virgins” is based not only on their public promise in the presence of the Church, but also in the official and solemn consecration by the Church or by the sealing of God himself. In the consecration of virgins it is particularly expressed that not only the “profession”, the virginal vow, but especially the Benediction and Consckration of the Church wants to establish the virginal state. Who therefore

v. THE MYSTICAL BRIDAL CHAPTURE WITH CHRIST

2. the covenant with Christ

It is difficult for us to get rid of the mistake of taking virginity too negatively. In the eyes of the world, it appears first and foremost as a renunciation of marriage. Thus, one likes to imagine a life in which there is a lack of help and protection, of comfort and joy. Well, one may have a respect for the fact that cine Virgo bravely holds out in this dry situation ascetically. Basically, however, she is often somewhat pitied. This view, however, misses the essence of virginity, which does not mean a loss, but a gain. It must be understood in a religious, positive way. Then sic is a happy bridehood with Christ, which is initiated by an engagement or marriage. Christ says to the virgin: “I entered into a covenant with you and you became mine” (Ez 16,8). In the consecration of virgins, this marriage with Christ forms the basic idea.

As at a wedding feast, the virgin is brought to the church at the consecration by two matrons and is presented and recommended for reception by a representative of the church. As a friend of the heavenly bridegroom, the bishop welcomes her and encourages sic to proceed courageously with her project.

ı. The Covenant with Christ

She makes the promise of perpetual virginity into the hands of the bishop, who receives it in the name of Christ. The covenant takes place in an ancient legal form, according to which the bride commits herself personally and surrenders herself as a bondwoman to Jesus Christ. With Paul, the

bishop can now say: “I betrothed you to a man, to Christ, and offered you as a chaste virgin to the Savior” (2 Cor 11:2).

The betrothal is liturgically concluded by a Eucharistic prayer, by a consecration prefession. The virgin is, as it were, an offering which is presented to Christ. Over it the bishop now performs the solemn sacrificial prayer of the Church. In thanksgiving for the blessings she has already received as the chosen one, the Virgin rises spiritually toward heaven. Up the heart! At this holy moment, the sky opens and the divine Bridegroom reveals Himself and descends. Blessed is He who descends from on high. “The marriage of the Lamb has now come” (Rev 19:7). Through the consecration, the consecration, the human and the divine are united. The Savior, who has approached with the angels, declares to the Virgin: “I will make an everlasting covenant with you” (Ez 16:60).

In the offering of the Mass, the Virgin offers herself as an offering in the form of a candle. This sacrifice is included in the Mass and the Virgin becomes spiritually involved in something

transformed into something higher. By a special and great grace, she is actually raised inwardly to a bride of Christ. /” the commnnon, the union with the Bridegroom becomes sacramentally complete. How wonderfully Jesus’ words sound: “In grace and mercy I betroth you to me forever” (Os 2:19). Communion has a special meaning. It is no longer a mere betrothal, but a definitive and mysterious union, a real marriage.

2. the symbols of the engagement

In ancient times, it was a practice here or there to take off the youth’s dress at the wedding and put on the woman’s robe. From this derives the ceremony of changing the top dress at the consecration of the virgin. The splendor of virginity is imagined as a garment with which the virgin is wrapped. Perhaps in the primitive Church the garment of reception was white to symbolize innocence, as was done with the newly baptized. Later, virgins were advised to wear a dark dress so that the seriousness of life would be preserved. The “dress of chastity,” as it is now called in the prayer of blessing, reminds the virgin of humility of heart and contempt for the world. From the projectiles of the evil enemy it offers protection and safety. This power rests in it because it is full of blessing, like the garment of the High Priest Aaron, on which the consecration oil from the

2. the symbols of the engagement

head flowed down. Actually it is gift of Christ: “I spread my mantle over you” (Ez 16,8). “He put on me the garments of salvation” (Is 61:10). For this reason it is also a pledge of the present and future promises given to virginity. By living in virginity on earth, the virgin deserves that the soul be adorned in heaven with the garment of immortality and joys, and after the Last Day the body with the garment of incorruption and transfiguration.

The veil, which was originally given as the only symbol, is the actual mark of the virgin. In long periods of history the virgins did not appear in the world with a special status dress. The veil is compared with the dress of Mary, which indicated virginity. Mystically, the veil reminds us that the virgin must remain pure, holy and spotless in body and soul. The veil is like a seal by which one recognizes that the virgin is already taken. Therefore, no other lover may approach. Towards the world the virgin is veiled. Only towards Christ she opens the veil. This veil also says that the virgin gladly submits to Christ as her head, and that she wants to be a true handmaid of Christ. If one day she comes to the gates of heaven with the immaculate veil, she will be a true servant of Christ.

they receive admittance like those who possess the wedding dress.

The ring is the very symbol of marriage: I entrust you to Jesus Christ! The virgin is now called the bride of Christ. The ring means that she has been sealed by the Holy Spirit. Before heaven and earth she must be recognized as married. If someone wanted to woo her, she simply shows the ring: I am already married! The ring of fidelity must never lose its luster. The ring is a pledge that the Holy Spirit will bestow the grace of steadfastness. As often as Christ sees the ring, He grants the bride new gifts and goods. Thus, the virgin blossoms like a flower in spring.

The wreath signifies the honor, dignity and power of virginity. It is a sign that the Divine Bridegroom wants to adorn the virgin soul with rich ornaments and all the jewels of grace. Hope and trust, which the wreath wants to strengthen, will spur the virgins on to all good works. The goal, the heavenly crowning, always hovers before her eyes. If she is diligent and faithful, she can expect that the bridegroom will one day grace her with the heavenly crown of virginity.

3. the dignity of the bride of Christ

Some call the soul a bride of Christ already when it is in the state of sanctification.

3. the dignity of the bride of Christ

Grace lives. But virginity is a special higher state. The virgin souls are called “higher souls” in the consecration preface. To the virgins Jesus urged, “Make for yourselves a new heart and a new spirit” (Ez 18:31). In a special sense, then, they can say, “We will now serve Christ in newness of spirit” (Rom 7:6). The virgin souls are not merely servants, friends, children of God, but brides of Jesus. Because Christ is the

King of heaven and earth, through the spousal covenant they are elevated to a higher rank, to a great dignity. As far as it is possible through the mercies of God, the brides enter into the status of the bridegroom. In the ecclesiastical liturgy, they are called “daughters of the king” and form an escort of honor to the king (Ps 44; 10) u

The virgin souls represent a closed circle of their own, from which the foolish virgins are excluded. John speaks of a specific following of the Lamb, a chosen group that possesses supernatural privileges (Rev 14:4). As “firstfruits,” they advance to the first place and are allowed to be closest to Christ. They are an elite group whose participants are religiously accorded a dignified status of their own.

To the virgins we can apply the words, “You will be called by a new name” (Is 62:2. Rev 2:17). The brides

V. The Mystical Bridehood with Christ

Christ’s may take the name of the bridegroom, as is customary at a marriage. “His name they will bear on their foreheads” (Rev 22:4, 14:1). The change of name says that they have changed and elevated their relationships, their position in life. They are transferred to a new happy life, which includes extraordinary honors and dignities.

In the Song of Songs, the bride asks the bridegroom: “Set your image on my heart and on my arm like a seal” (Hl 8:6). Now this mark of the bridehood remains eternally. It means that the bridal union is indissoluble and firm. The bride is a “sealed spring” (Hl 4,12), whose seal cannot be broken. This is probably what the Church wants to point out when she speaks several times of a “sealing” at the consecration of virgins: of the veil as a seal, of the seal on the face, of the

seal of the Holy Spirit. The virgin souls are therefore sealed souls. Of course, virgin consecration does not confer an indelible characteristic like baptism and confirmation. But it cannot be said that this gracious sealing means nothing. The permanent bridehood of Christ has the supernatural effect that the bride, through grace, becomes a special image of Christ, that she graciously bears within herself a symbol of the Bridegroom. The permanence and dignity of the virginal bridal state are thus expressed without doubt.

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4. the care of Christ for his bride

4. the care of Christ for his bride

The history of the Old Covenant tells us how God, as the Bridegroom, led the chosen people, his bride, through the centuries. With His acts of grace and mercy, the Bridegroom is near, comforting and delighting His bride: by sending leaders, by revealing the Law, by instructing religious festivals, by victories over enemies, *etc.* Even from the rock gushes the water of refreshment and heaven rains down the manna. In order to lead the bride up to higher spiritual levels, trials are necessary. Every unfaithfulness is punished. The bride is to be more detached from the earthly and she must receive better understanding of the providence of God. The promised land will be given and taken away and times will be darkened and brightened again. The prophets interpret the meaning of all the events and encourage the Bride of God to trust. All the manifold providences pursue only the goal to make the bride richer in scelic experiences. The bride must always become more receptive to the goodness and mercy of the bridegroom. Oh, if she had realized in time how great the spiritual goods were that the bridegroom had in store for her. As soon as she was ready for

it, he would lead her over to the happiness of the messianic time.

Towards the end of the Old Covenant, the heavenly wisdom in particular is given as the bridegroom.

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V. The Mystical Bridehood with Christ

praised. The pure, virgin wisdom, revealed in the law, was finally the one who wanted to pave the way to happiness for the Israelite people. The words of this wisdom are pure gold. This wisdom helps and heals, frees from dangers, judges the persecutors and strengthens the weary. What insight and what power is for a bride a word of love from the heart of the bridegroom! The message brought by the Son of God in the New Covenant is perfect wisdom. After all, the Son of God, the heavenly Bridegroom, is the eternal Word from the bosom of the Father. This virgin Word of God grants light and life, and by its purity strengthens the sense of virginity. In virginity rests a profound wisdom. With this heavenly wisdom, the divine Bridegroom guides the virgin along immaculate paths. Therefore, both in the consecration of virgins and in the virgin masses, this wisdom, the eternal Word, is praised and glorified.

Like a bridegroom, Christ guides the Church, his Brant through history. Mystically and Eucharistically, Christ dwells constantly with his bride, to perform the heavenly mysteries for her benefit and joy. This bride he defends against the attacks of the world, maintaining her in the purity of truth and virtue. In the celibacy of the priesthood and in the vows of religious orders, he sets before virgin souls ideals which are to strengthen them in the storms of the world. How

5. the devotion of the virgin to her bridegroom

many virginal inspirations arise from the ascetical, liturgical and mystical life which Christ unfolds in the Church to an extensive degree throughout the centuries! With the virginal spirit, the Good Shepherd nourished and promoted charity and the apostolate, which brought glory to His Bride in the history of the Church. How far into the cultural and public life Christ distributed his benefits precisely with virginity! The Church could never have accomplished such great things had she not been endowed and preserved by Christ as a spotless bride.

As Bridegroom, Christ resembles the “sun” which joyfully “comes forth from the bridal chamber” (Ps 18:6). Every day this sun shines above the bride to awaken life and fertility with its rays in a virginal way. Already to the Old Covenant it gave light and dignity. But the New Covenant was much more receptive to its transfiguring power. Not only to the chosen people and the church as a community does she bestow her benefits as a bridegroom. The glow of her spousal love also reaches the individual soul to the innermost.

J. The devotion of the virgin to her bridegroom According to the ecclesiastical prayers, virgins are “vessels” consecrated in the name of God. On the basis of the Gospel, one also speaks of a chest or of a

Boxes in which a precious treasure, virginity, is hidden (Mt 13:52), No less meaningful is the comparison with the ark of the covenant over which the glory of the Lord rested (2 Sm 6:2). Through the spousal union, the scele becomes a throne

of God. The gold with which the ark was covered is emblematic of the virgin adornment. Those who were not authorized were not allowed to touch the Ark of the Covenant. Thus, it is forbidden to approach the Virgin or to compromise her perfect chastity. The tablets of the law, which were in the ark, signify the word of God, which the virgins received. Above the Ark of the Covenant, God often revealed Himself from the pillar of cloud. Will not the virgin soul receive enlightenments and inspirations from her bridegroom who is so near?

The little oil lily is a sign that the wise virgins are vigilant. The bridegroom can come with his grace at a time when it is not expected. The virgins must always be ready: Watch and pray! For the virgins, to whom the heavenly Bridegroom is everything, this should be natural. Their heart is always open to the bridegroom. The virgin soul is the oil that feeds the flame of the bridal love. A pious bride of Christ will not merely preserve the oil of the virgin mind, but will increase it with zeal. The brighter the virginal love flares up, the more luminous and

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5. the devotion of the virgin to her bridegroom

warmer it becomes in her soul. Virgin liveliness increases the pleasure of the heavenly bridegroom.

Virginity, according to the Song of Songs, is a fertile garden. “A closed garden you are, my sister, my bride… a sealed spring” (Hl 4,12). The virgin soul is like a loosened soil in which the seed of the Word of God is sown. From his bride Christ may expect first of all that she receives his words and preserves and unfolds them, makes them grow and blossom. She is the “good soil that bears fruit, even a hundredfold”

(Mt 13:8). Such a word of God is the evangelical counsel of virginity, which wants to be well cared for. In the virgin garden there is also a fountain of the Holy Spirit. These special waters of grace make the soil more fertile than it would otherwise be. Thus, flowers and virtues that spread the most beautiful fragrance flourish in the virgin garden. Fruits ripen, which become the joy of the bridegroom.

In the Song of Songs we hear the voice of the bridegroom: “Open to me... my taxi, my unsullied” (Hls5,2). When the play of colors of the plumage shimmers in the sunlight, the dove grants a splendid sight (Ps 67,14). This is the beauty of the virgin soul, which stands in the light of the heavenly Bridegroom. The purity of the defenseless and guileless doves would be endangered if they were not protected by the

heavenly bridegroom (Ps 73:19). If the little dove feels lonely and abandoned, it begins to lament. “Like a dove I am circling. My eyes are weary, looking up to the heights” (Is 38, 14). With a rapid beat of wings, the virgin soul rushes towards her bridegroom as soon as he becomes somehow visible.

6. the intimacy of the spousal relationship

In the Song of Songs we see the longing that fills both bride and bridegroom. It is understandable that a pious virgin has the desire to be with Christ. She is indifferent to everything on earth and sacrifices everything. The heavenly bridegroom is everything to her. She wants to stay with him and have a discussion with him. In this longing she seeks Christ. This longing love does not remain without an answer, even if the

bride does not see and hear it for the time being. “The King will desire your beauty” (Ps 44:12). More often in the Scriptures he exclaims: Come, my bride! He loves virginity in a special way and is attracted by virginal splendor. Suddenly he surprises the bride with his visit, according to the Song of Songs just in the early morning.

It should be noted that in those prayers which touch on the intimate relationship of bride and bridegroom, the Church often exhorts to the fear of God. The spousal relationship must not be conceived too humanly, too familiarly. The heavenly bridegroom is the Son

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6. the intimacy of the spousal relationship

God, the King of heaven and earth. The reverence that the bride shows to her bridegroom cannot be great enough. Earthly thoughts and feelings must not creep into this spousal love. The spousal relationship of grace is spiritual, supernatural and mystical, for which all purity of heart is still too little high and holy. The oil of grace with which this love is consecrated must also trickle down into the bodily garment, like the consecrating oil of Aaron, of which the consecration of virgins speaks.

Now the undivided service begins, as the apostle Paul demands. The virgin is therefore called “Afagd” in the consecration prayer. She is constantly at the service of her bridegroom, and her zeal here must know no bounds. Because the spousal benefits have their own and new character, her gratitude must also be a new and increased one. Therefore, a “new song” of praise is now required (Ps. 39:4, 95, 1 Rev. 5:9, 14:3). It will never be possible to give thanks for the bridal elevation once enough. But the

heavenly bridegroom rejoices in the grateful attitude and returns it with new graces and mercies. Because they are so dignified and exalted, the Church needs the expression “crown” several times. Christ crowns spousal love. Always with new “graces and mercies he crowns his bride” (Ps 102:4).

On earth it is almost everywhere the custom that the bride is transferred to the house of the groom.

will. But before death, the virgin cannot go up to heaven. Therefore, Christ comes as the bridegroom to the dwelling of the bride, as he went to the wise virgins. The Savior loves to dwell in chaste hearts and to set up His throne here. The church therefore prays that the bride may prepare her dwelling beautifully. When Christ dwells with her, the bride may exclaim with St. Agnes in her happiness: “Behold, what I have desired I already see! What I have hoped for, I already possess!

1. the necessity of the degrees for the acquisition

The people of the world today still think in the same way as they did at the time of Christ: they cannot even comprehend the indissolubility of marriage, let alone voluntary and chaste celibacy or evangelical virginity. In the natural field, many difficulties stand in the way: the weaknesses of fallen human nature, the liberties of sensuality, the power of public opinion, the sting of youth! Even Christ added to the

advice to virginity the words: “Whoever can grasp it, let him grasp it” (Mt 19:12). Only in the light of Christ’s faith is it possible to understand the ideal of virginity. It is a spiritual mystery of Christianity. Whoever wants to take hold of the virginal ideal must first implore a special grace from heaven. “The love of virginity,” we read in the Consecration Preface, “is graciously kindled by God.” Heaven bestows “desire and strength” for it. It is a mystery of heavenly vocation and grace, “a gift all its own, flowing down from the fountain of divine bounty.”

Already marriage, according to Paul, is a “great mystery” (Eph 5:32) because it pictures the union of Christ with the Church. This high

VT. The virgin life as a mystery

Of course, the dignity of marriage must not be diminished. However, virginity represents this 1’bond in a certain sense even more immediate and fully consummated: Not through a bodily communion, but through a mystical marriage. It is thus a “mystery” “which virgin souls aspire to,” a “mystery” to which “they give their whole life.” In this context, the consecration preface calls virgins the “more exalted souls”. With her bridehood of Christ, virginity is deeply involved in the mysteries of faith and grace. In virginity, therefore, rests a “mysterious hidden wisdom of God” which even the “princes of this world” do not fully and correctly recognize (1 Cor 2:7).

The sexual realm is not only intimate and extraordinary, but also mysterious. This sphere is therefore kept hidden and a veil is put over it, as it were. Whoever is not authorized to do so by the sacrament of marriage may not remove this veil.

The Virgin renounces such unveiling of her own free will and forever. Towards men, towards the world, her secret shall remain under veil. In this sense she spurns the world and does not want to be recognized by it. Unveiled, unharmed, she offers her love as a sacrifice to the Creator in the freshness of youth. The veil is also the sign of reverence in which she appears before Christ. Not only her body, but

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2. dice silent solitude

Her whole heart is also an immaculate sacrifice, with which she wants to serve Christ in humility and obedience. Full of joy over the virginal devotion, Christ now wraps her with the veil of his heavenly love. No human being may touch this spousal veil. The supernatural mystical love is the secret of the bridehood, which only the virgin can understand to some extent.

2. the silent solitude

The two lovers of virginity, John the Baptist and the Apostle Paul, withdrew into solitude before embarking on their mission to the public. Solitude was their secret. The heavenly Bridegroom says of the virgins, “I will entice them and lead them into the wilderness and speak to their hearts” (Os 2:14). According to the Song of Songs, the bride has grown weary of the world’s festivities. She asks the bridegroom to take her out so that bride and bridegroom can be alone. If a virgin is to be happy, she must have a sense of seclusion, of gathering and devotion. She has renounced marriage and family so that she may become less attached or rooted to the earthly and worldly. No disorderly attachments must weigh down her wings, and then she can easily take flight as a dove. Does she not have a place where she can be undisturbed and

can be alone, sic must at least build a wall around her heart. Virginity is often compared to a walled city in the midst of which Christ dwells.

A guard shall be placed at the gate of the city to prevent anyone from crossing the threshold without permission. The virginal life in the heart has already been disturbed in these or those virgins by improper hearing or speaking. That is why the wise virgin asks, “Set, O Lord, cine guard before my mouth” (Ps 140:3). But the bridegroom asks of the virgin, “Enclose your ears with thorns” (Sir 28:28). At the consecration of virgins, the Church sometimes repeats the

request for heavenly protection, so that virginity may be preserved not only bodily but also seclically unharmed. It is precisely through virginity that virgins should become wise and prudent. Their “speech” must therefore, as the apostle admonishes, be “seasoned with salt,” with the emblem of wisdom and prudence (Col 4:6). Christ, as it were, preserves the virgin’s ears and adorns them with his signs, so that she may “listen to the voice of wisdom” (Prov 2:2). The Virgin should be trusted to keep the heavenly and human secrets. Happy speaking and careful listening are learned through thoughtful silence and sensible seclusion.

The solitude, which should be dear to the virgin, is not a desert, but cin field, on which

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3. the peaceful hiddenness in Christ

in which a “precious treasure is hidden. He who discovers it keeps the find secret” (Mt 13:44). In view of this gain of virginity, the virgin is indifferent to earthly things and can easily give them away. This treasure of virginity compensates her for all hardships and renunciations. This spiritual and supernatural “treasury of wisdom” (Sir 1:31) is always meant when the Church speaks in her prayers of the jewels and ornaments which the Virgin may receive as gifts from the Bridegroom. The heavenly goods that the Virgin has before her are like an unclouded and transparent sea. At the bottom sparkles a mystery, a pearl, a “margarita” which signifies the bridal union with Christ. The heart of the Virgin is attracted by these precious things. For “where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Mt 6:21).

3. the peaceful hiddenness in Christ

The virgin should feel the need to be alone in silence at least now and then. Some not only lack a family circle, but also have to put up with a certain social seclusion. It is important to have a room, a closet, which can be used in a supernatural spirit as a “bridal chamber”. In quiet hours, Christ, her bridegroom, is invisibly closest to her (St. 1:3).

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VT. The virgin life as a mystery

Judith is reported to have set up a prayer chamber in which she could withdraw (Idt 8:5). Christ admonishes his bride: “If you want to pray, go into your closet, close the door and pray…. in secret” (Mt 6:6). In the silence of her private sanctuary, the Virgin can enjoy the “heavenly experiences” that the Church has promised to virgins.

When Christ entered the wise virgins, the “door was shut” (Mt 25:10). It is striking how this closedness is always emphasized. The bridal garden is closed, the spring sealed, the treasure hidden. The world is not allowed to enter to bring in its perceptions and distractions, its lusts and frivolities. The virgin has separated and lives secluded from the world and has died to the world. Her secrets are not accessible to the people of the world.

Their hiddenness is not desolate, but enlightened. For “her life is hidden with Christ” (Col 3:3). Her Bridegroom, the heavenly Lamb, now takes the seals from the books and makes known to His bride the supernatural mysteries. John

testifies to us that he reveals more to those entrusted to him than to others (John 15:14). What he has “hidden from the proud” he will “entrust to the simple” (Mt 11:25). Through illuminations and intercessions, he communicates to the virgins rays of “that light” which “is unapproachable” (1 Tim.

3. the peaceful hiddenness in Christ

6,16). To a greater degree than others, the mystical virgin soul attains “knowledge” of the mysteries of God, which are “hidden in the treasures of heavenly wisdom” (Col 2:3). In abundance there gush the living waters of the Holy Spirit, which make the garden of the soul fruitful. In the past, the virgin may have thought that she was at a disadvantage on earth. She herself did not understand God’s provisions by which her life was guided. Perhaps she lamented, “You are a hidden God” (Is 45:15). Now the mysteries are gradually cleared. She realizes better and better that the providence of her bridegroom rules wonderfully in her life. This is especially true of the inner life of grace, where the wise counsels of God work most mysteriously. The personal life becomes especially mysterious when the virgin feels from the external and spiritual experiences that God has for her own plans and special ways, just the best for the peculiarity and situation of her life. The purer and more perfect a virgin is, the more receptive she becomes to the influences and touches of the Holy Spirit. The more beautiful her “heart shines in purity,” the higher she “ascends the mountain of the Lord” (Ps 23:3). “The portion in the temple of the Lord that refreshes the heart” always increases (Wis 3:14). A mirror is a pure virgin soul, in which the image of Christ always appears more clearly. The more it is reflected in the

The more the soul rises to the mystical, the less the soul itself has to do. It only has to be ready for the heavenly. “Blessed are the pure in heart” (Mt 5,8). More and more they become a mirror of the heavenly, a reflection of the divine goodness and love, and yet a mirror in its own character and with special colors.

4. the mysterious peace

As long as a virgin is openly or secretly somewhat dissatisfied with her fate, she resembles a troubled sea. It is agitated and agitated and therefore dark and turbid. Through full calm, however, it becomes clear and transparent in the soul. The splendor of virginal purity can only unfold in the equanimity and harmony of the mind. The brightness and purity of the virgin soul thus presupposes a peaceful tranquility, which must remain permanent. This state should become as solid as a crystal. Then, in this pure transparency, the heavenly colors become glorious.

Love has its own mysteries. Even under the happiest circumstances, it can never be fully realized among people on earth. The lack that human love finally leaves behind can only be filled by God. The virgin, who is completely taken possession of by the heavenly love of Christ, feels no such difficulties. The virgins become in the bride

4. the mysterious peace

Christ’s fullness of God.” The “love of God,” “which surpasses all knowledge,” the virgins will seek to grasp “in breadth and length, in height and depth” (Eph. 3:19). Thus, the human need for love can no longer lack anything.

Christ will also appear to the virgin brides with the usual greeting: “Peace be with you” (Jn 20:19). Peace is a grace that Christ imparts especially to those who are closest to Him. Christ, the bringer of peace, will initiate the virgins even more deeply into peace than others: “I make a covenant of peace with them. An everlasting covenant it shall be” (Ez 37:26). “Faithfulness sprouts from the earth, and righteousness looks down from heaven” (Ps 84:12). This spousal betrothal brings about a peace “that surpasses all understanding” (Phil 4:7). Wherever the bride of Christ looks and stands, everything lights up and everything seems transfigured to her. A paradisiacal breeze seems to blow toward her.

To the virgin souls Christ has promised that he will lead them “xx” to the time of cooking. So the virgin life should not be sad, but it must become joyful in Christ. With her white robes and adorned with wreaths, she may tarry in the banquet hall with the heavenly Bridegroom. Who could be more generous and loving than Christ? Through his riches of

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VT. The virgin life as a mystery

Wisdom and grace, he makes the bride’s soul happy with peace. The sweets of love, which the virgin is allowed to taste, become a deep supernatural peace in the soul, A festive mood pulsates through the heart, as if it were touched by a heavenly music. The purer the sphere of feeling, the more abundantly the oil of joy penetrates,

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THE POSSIBILITY OF VIRGIN LIFE IN THE WORLD

1. the place in the world according to God’s providence

Occasionally it is said: Whoever does not want to marry should go to the monastery. Certainly, no daughter who is called by God to the convent should be kept away from it. In feudal times, noble daughters who could not marry were sometimes simply sent to a convent. Of course, it is not right to unduly urge a daughter who does not feel called to enter a women’s order or a congregation of sisters. Some would like to go in themselves if they were not held back by circumstances: By feeble health, by duties to the family, by special duties in the world, by peculiarity of character. Now, if the ideal of virginity is more strongly emphasized in the world, this cannot spoil any monastic vocation. Experience shows that such virgins, precisely because of their virginal ideal, were not infrequently led to the convent after all.

It is not without danger to push such daughters, who would have liked to enter a convent, into a marriage. The motives

that sometimes lead mothers to persuade their daughters to marry are not always so noble.

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VI. Possibility of Virgin Life in the World

But we find daughters who themselves “want to marry at any price” in order not to become an “old maid”. Of course, we do not want to deny any girl a proper marriage if she has the inclination to do so. But these and those girls cannot marry at all: Because of duties to parents, because of their profession, because of infirmities or insufficient health, because of lack of opportunity, *etc.* One should be careful with the saying that “marriage is better”. The apostle Paul says: “He who does not marry the virgin does better” (1 Cor 7:38). In any case, one must not risk his faith or the salvation of his soul by marrying. Even those virgins who reject marriage for themselves should know and respect marriage as an ideal. Very nicely a virgin soul writes: “The chosen ideal becomes all the greater, the more beautiful the other was seen, which one voluntarily renounced.” “But one should also be allowed to portray the ideal of virginity to those daughters who are attracted to marriage. All wives should also be able to properly value and appreciate this ideal. “

A virgin says: “The attitude of either getting married or going to a convent is very common wit today.” “The convent or the family will usually be the ideal of girls at a young age. At most, in certain professions in the world, the ideal of virginity eventually floats before them.” After the slogan “convent or marriage,” a

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I. The place in the world according to the providence of God

“Wall or a man”, would actually be for the older virgins in the world neatly no place. Some do not even realize that by doing so they create a certain “spiritual predicament”. Without a doubt, it is reprehensible when parents want to persuade a daughter, without need and for selfish reasons, to simply stay at home with them. Virginity in the world must also be chosen voluntarily and for higher considerations. For this one must also have a vocational grace from God. A young lady who does not want to marry and enter a convent should be convinced that her life is precious after all. Besides marriage and convent, one can also cultivate the values of personality and fulfill a noble mission in life. God’s providence, through external circumstances and internal pardons, arranges for many daughters to remain single forever in the outside world and to maintain perfect chastity. For these virgins, according to God’s will, there must be a right to exist, that is, a place, a space in the world. A virgin explains: “It should be pointed out a little more that it is a duty to give a small place to such single virgins. “A virgin, who had to take care of her relatives, says confidently: “Having entered my fifties, I am waiting for the good Lord to lead me to a place. “

Not merely economically or personally, but also spiritually and religiously, the young must be

VII Possibility of Virgin Life in the World

Chrismation has a place in the world. It cannot simply be limited to the monasteries. Virginity in the world is not merely a stopgap in an embarrassment; Christ gave the evangelical counsel of virginity universally, and the Church still recognizes the vow of virginity in the world outside. If Christ Himself has proclaimed an advice, people cannot

simply “advise against” it or withhold the gift from virgins under the necessary conditions. Arguably, it would also not be honest to deliberately and preferably conceal this advice. Provided the factual and personal circumstances are present, not one person can say it is “not good” when Paul in the Holy Spirit says it is “better.” So the virgin souls in the world are not “pitiable creatures”. But it would be sacrilege to snatch the ideal from their hands. One should not idealize until one loses the concrete ground under one’s feet. But the false wisdom of simply letting these virgin souls “flounder” in the world is no better than keeping their ideal alive in the world. Christ will certainly not approve of a lack of positive concern for His evangelical ideal today.

2. the resistance to the persecutors

The egg walls with which virginity is fought against are so flimsy that

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2. the resistance to the persecutors

we do not have to refute them for a long time. The command to cooperate in the multiplication of the human race (Gen 1:28) is not obligatory for every single human being. Within the legal and moral framework it would not be possible for a good number of people. The family does not suffer from the fact that there are gifted and high people outside of marriage. It is precisely the virginal people who have often done the greatest for the good of the family. It is not true that virgin souls are separated from the people. In the promotion of the common good, these outstanding personalities are not infrequently at the forefront. Thus they do not form a foreign body in the world, but the regeneration of the society starts from them whenever it has become in need of reform. This also disproves that the virgins are drones, useless people. In case of need, the persecutors bring them themselves and place them at the most difficult and dangerous posts of the community work. How then do these same detractors claim that virginity makes one abnormal, and that these virgin souls are psychologically suffering? According to the Gospel, it is necessary to distinguish between the wise virgins and the deadly people. The foolish daughters of the world are only those who have left the world, as it were, the degenerates, who do not possess the ideal of virginity. Only the wise virgins were given the spiritual gifts.

They have been given the secrets of virginity. They stand as such high and exalted personalities that even the world cannot occasionally deny them special respect.

The reproaches against virginity make even less impression if we know the attitudes from which the criticism springs. These persecutors are mostly on the ground of heresy, where the virgin lilies do not want to flourish. Virginity is a secret of the true faith. Those who have not preserved the conceptions of the faith intact will not understand the purity of the virginal ideal either. An era that glorifies sexual tasks in a one-sided and exaggerated way according to naturalistic and materialistic spirit will have too little sense for cultural, spiritual and religious needs in general. For people who indulge in sensual debauchery, virginal abstinence is a constant reproach, which they would like to remove from their proximity. The despisers of virginity are often enemies of the church. On occasion they have blatantly declared that virgin souls are too closely connected with the church. They cannot be helped by worldly means because their lives are so independent and free from the world. This worries these worldly people that the virgin souls are a power for the church.

2. the resistance to the persecutors

The persecutors of virginity have their own method, which must repel. They do not fight with objective reasons, but with mockery and scorn, with contempt and slander. In the world they seek to create a sphere which is quite unfavorable to perfect chastity. If they succeed in making such and such virgins weak, they shift the blame away from themselves. First they want to win them over and seduce them with flattery or threats, and then they throw stones at the fallen ones mercilessly and leave them in the lurch. On the one hand, they exploit them commercially and economically, and on the other hand, they destroy their ideal and try to disenfranchise them as much as possible. Often their successes are praised and flattery is said to their faces, while their existence is constantly being undermined and the highest sources of strength are being cut off. Today one laments about the increasing immoral corruption and tomorrow one destroys the virgin ideals, which would be so important for the renewal. The objections can therefore deceive only those who are so short-sighted that they do not see this mink of contradictions.

The virgin souls must not “fret” that such a beautiful ideal as virginity is, is constantly fought over and disputed. After all, Christ foretold that the world would not grasp it. In persecution, a prophecy is constantly being fulfilled, thus proving the authenticity of the ideal.

Paul might not have stated the doctrines so clearly and decisively had he not been prompted to do so by the dispute in Corinth. The church fathers wrote about the ideal so enthusiastically because they had to defend it before the world again and again. It was through the struggle, then, that the Idcal became so ‘great before the eyes of the world. In the course of church history, the struggle went to the blood several times. Many virgins have shed blood for their innocence! In martyrdom the ideal of virginity won the most brilliant victory over the persecutors. The world only marveled that weak and timid virgins could be so brave and courageous, so fearless and heroic. So, don’t virgins stand taller than their persecutors? The ideal of virginity is a great mystery.

3. the integrity towards the world

After all, could it not hurt to maintain perfect chastity all the time? Such silly questions can be raised only by wicked worldlings. Of course, the examination of the problems has shown that in normal people neither health nor mental condition suffers from virginity. Is perfect chastity still possible in today’s world? Christ’s advice is feasible at all times. In fact, even at the present time there are rows of virgins living in virginal purity. So it can be done, even if special

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of the other obstacles make it somewhat more difficult. The greatest difficulty is that the world casts doubt, discord and hesitation into the heart of virgins with all kinds of questions. If virginity is only critically judged or openly fought against, or at least hushed up as an ideal, the danger may arise that the courage and self-confidence of the virgin will be weakened. If it came in this way also to ideal fluctuations, then many Fräulein could not jump nevertheless from the Ehelosigkeit out. More stimulating, then, is the other question: can’t something great be made out of chaste celibacy? Only through the ideal of virginity is this possible. This ideal gives conviction and determination, security and firmness in the heart of virgin Scels. Then they will also be happy, happier than some married couples, as they themselves testify.

Perfect chastity is undoubtedly threatened by many and grave dangers in our sultry and sensual times. A single woman can underestimate these dangers, tire in the struggle, or be infected by wrong ideas. By pointing out these dangers, some want to discourage virgins from the ideal of virginity. But the apostle Paul justifies virginity precisely because in the world there are many obstacles to spiritual progress. Virginity is the means to overcome these dangers and difficulties more easily. Through

virginity, one escapes many tribulations of the flesh and many earthly worries. One feels more in the world as a

pilgrim, is less touched by the transitory, takes better care of scine scele and is more interested in the spiritual and prepares better for eternity. The disadvantages and dangers that the moderns attribute to celibacy in the world can be overcome specifically through virginity. The ideal of virginity is to grant to the character an independence and perseverance, towards earthly things a distance and serenity, in behavior and appearance a vigilance and caution. Genuine virginity is therefore an advantage and a help, especially in the world, a wall against which the dangers of the world will bounce.

Untouchedness and spotlessness, which are in the nature of virginity, should also become untouchedness and spotlessness towards the world. Virginity and purity are understood in a broader sense. The virgins must not adopt views and opinions of the world that would tarnish the purity of faith. They must keep the desires and attachments of the world away from them in order to preserve the beauty of grace in full splendor. From all the imperfections of the world they must remain as untouched and unobscured as possible. So it does not matter if they

3. the integrity towards the world

is somewhat repelled by the world. A certain ascetic seclusion and detachment is, after all, part of her virginal life. It can even have something good that she is guarded with Argus eyes and is criticized quickly. Thus she learns to keep her shield bright, so that one cannot reproach her. Of course, virgin souls also carry imperfections and humanities. Instead of only criticizing and mocking them, one should help and assist them to make their ways even more perfect. This care of the virgin souls in the world is deficient in many places today. The virgins, however, may be assured that they will not be abandoned by Heaven. God does not send virgin vocations without sending the graces necessary for virgin life. From the consecration of virgins we see with what fervour the Church prays that graces may flow down upon the virgin life. In the liturgy of the Church we hear from time to time the promises given to virgin souls to spur them on and cheer them up. Mary, the Most Blessed Virgin, the angels, the special friends of the virgins, and the virgin saints in heaven will have a watchful eye for the hardships and dangers, for the sorrows and persecutions of the virgins on earth. The virgins only have to open the souls with their own prayers for all the heavenly graces.

4. the spectacle or the nuisance before the world

By the fruits one wants to determine whether the tree is really good. The virgin souls were loved and honored by the

people, because they were vigorously engaged in charity, in social welfare or did great things in the religious and cultural field. They worked cheaper and more sacrificially, had more time and foresight, and felt more deeply into the circumstances. It was precisely those tasks that were unpleasant and difficult and that no one else wanted to perform that could be assigned to them. They were trusted to keep secrets better and to judge more objectively and disinterestedly. Some even suspected that mysterious powers resided in them. Thus one recommended oneself gladly to their prayers, because one believed that they themselves are able to do more with God than others. They were also expected to bring renewal when the weeds began to grow somewhere in society. In the eyes of the world, therefore, they were considered a revelation of something higher, a “spectacle” (1 Cor. 4:9) that was admired without being fully explained.

Since the virgins are often judged by the external achievements, the danger is not small that they throw themselves into an external business activity. Thus they neglect the inwardness and their work becomes unnoticeably hollow and all too human. Because of their reputation, they are often given higher and better positions.

trusts. Honor may get into their heads a little, and they may make themselves all too precious. In the exercise of power, they easily overstep the bounds and want to rule too much, or they interfere in other people’s affairs. In certain positions, it no longer seems that virgins live by renunciation and modesty. Seduced by the spirit of the world, one compensates for the virginal deprivations by

other pleasures or one takes a proper share in the comforts and pleasures of the world. Against such conduct the world suddenly rises up, especially when its prestige or merit is disputed. “Woe to the people through whom the offense comes” (Matt. 18:7).

The praise and flattery have already harmed the virgin souls in the world more than the persecution and criticism. The virgins must remain lilies among the domes. The virgin Paul describes their situation: “We are reviled and we bless. We are persecuted and we suffer it patiently. We are blasphemed and we pray” (1 Cor 4:12). In this situation, virgin souls are the most respected and reap the richest blessings from Heaven. This also maintains their purity and sincerity, the unique attraction of their soul.

That the worldly people who do not grasp the dignity of virginity, the virgins there

or mock them there, cannot be surprising. But it is a nuisance when the “good Christians blow the same horn. They should realize that they then “get the business of the world”. From the Catholics one should be able to expect that they would estimate a virgin soul not only according to the outer successes, but according to the inner dignity. A virgin complains about this lack: “The single virgin is not valued in public as a strong woman who has taken her life in her own hands out of conviction, out of the consciousness of a higher task in life, and has made great things out of it.” So grateful is cine virgin in the world, who is given the “full recognition”, as it corresponds to her “inner value”. Admittedly, one admits that the virgins themselves are to blame now and

then if people do not respect them duly. The prerequisite is that the virgin herself grasps her dignity and arranges her life accordingly. “It seems to me that virgins themselves must above all uphold the high values of virginity.”

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THE VIRGIN WAY OF LIFE AS A STAND

1. the spiritual requirements of a state in virginity

As long as a virgin does not marry, she is counted among the “state of virgins”. However, this state of the female single is not yet the “state of virginity” in the narrowest sense. The single woman is obliged to perfect chastity according to divine commandment. Perpetual virginity, however, is an evangelical counsel. Not mere celibacy, but actual virginity is the ideal. The state of singleness does not become the state of evangelical virginity by itself through long continuance, but must be raised to it by a religious act, by a resolution or determination. Only through this consecration to Christ do we have a special form of belonging to God, the bridehood of Christ. This religious state has a special content. The virgin wants to permanently renounce earthly worries as much as possible in order to better serve and please God, to be able to sanctify herself in body and soul in a special way. This requires its own way of life, which is always associated ascetically with the state of perfection. It is a means to become more perfect.

The evangelical virginity is a

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VII. the virgin way of life as a state

Grace of heaven, a call of God, which must be recognized and respected by people. These chosen virgins, whom God Himself gathered into a multitude, must therefore be given a proper place in the human community. It is not permissible to resist or create obstacles to the lawful execution of the evangelical counsel, but the human community must seek to promote and facilitate this virginal way of life. It would be to disregard an ordinance of God’s Providence not to grant to this virginal form of life that evaluation and validity in society which corresponds to the evangelical counsel or to the heavenly vocation of the individual.

Whoever knows that he is called by God must also become firm and secure in his attitude. In her consecration, the Virgin has bound herself voluntarily. It is a promise to Christ which the virgin will not take back, a covenant which she does not want to dissolve. In the face of all difficulties that might later arise against her decision, she wants to stand faithfully and bravely. Her virginity is inwardly a virtue, a habitus which perseveres, and outwardly a way of life, a special way of life, which is to be constantly observed in the future. This state is not something temporary, but something final, a sacrifice of life. It must not be ge

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1. spiritual conditions of the virgin state

The new virginity cannot be changed, unless God Himself demands it by an extraordinary sign. The new virgin way of

life, therefore, has in its nature a persistence and permanence, an unchangeable direction, an indissoluble bond, as it is presupposed in a state.

Such a state of life and being of the virgin is not merely a substitute for monastery or marriage, so that she may also have some consolation. It is an ideal of its own, which has an existence in itself, an evangelical attitude to life, which means something independent according to the counsel of Christ. Virginity, therefore, does not essentially consist in an external task, in a charitable or social profession. In its nature it is something personal and spiritual, a special form of union with Christ, a marriage to Christ, which contains something immediate and undivided, not only a condition and independence, but also a peculiar religious fullness. This consecrated service to Christ is an “angelic way of life”, that is, a particular way of life. The virgin has the right to take those means, and the duty to perform those exercises, which are necessary for the maintenance of this union with Christ and for the performance of this service to Christ. Therefore, this status-based way of life must be granted to the virgin and other people must respectfully consider this way of life.

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VII. the virgin Icben way as a stand

The virgin way of life, which Christ not only advised but sanctified and transfigured with miracles, is a treasure, a precious stone for human society, as the Church itself expresses it. Are the chosen virgin seclen, who are called by John the “firstfruits,” not worthy of reverence and protection in the community? The Holy Scriptures themselves enumerate a number of status privileges which belong to the virgin souls in the community life: The new name, the

new song, the white robe, the banquet, the immediate following of the Lamb, the adornment and endowment, their own heavenly crown. The multitudes of virgins are manifestly and obviously treated as a separate estate by Christ Himself.

2. recognition as a state in the ecclesiastical legal sphere

If a way of life has an important function in the community, it is also legally granted the imprint of a state. Does virginity fulfill such a function in the church? The opinion on the earthly is undoubtedly of great importance in the Church. In the virginal form of life, concern for the earthly is pushed back. Paul says: “I wish you to be without worry. He who does not marry is concerned about what is the Lord’s, how he may please God” (1 Cor. 7:32). The heart is made anxious by the

2. recognition as a state in the ecclesiastical legal sphere

Virginity undivided, the service of God more zealous, the life more spiritualized, the devotion to Christ more immediate. This is the condition for virgins to have more strength and time, more sacrificial joy and prestige available for the apostolate in the Church. The example of continence is of the utmost importance especially today, at a time when morality is struggling with so many difficulties. If virginity has such an eminent function in the ecclesial community, both for the cultus and for the apostolate, for the formation of the personality and for the mastery of the earthly, it must have the prestige and dignity, the power and importance of a state. From a declaration of the Council of Trent we can see that virginity has always been considered a state in the Catholic Church.

In the Church today, virginity often appears in connection with religious vows. Where the religious state lives, the state of virginity is always present. With the modern congregations of sisters, virginity has been brought far into the world. The sisters, who work in small groups in stations in the world, can be considered in a certain sense as “virgin souls in the world”, admittedly under the care of their religious rule and their religious leadership. The need to preserve virginity in the world among elderly Misses

The need to pay greater attention to the vows of the young women has therefore been less prominent in the more recent period of church history. These circumstances explain why a few years ago a “secular institute” was founded for virgins in the world, in which they take the three monastic vows. The effort to detach the virginal form of life from the monastic vows and to make it independent for the virgins in the world is therefore not far off. Thus, virginity in the world is not considered by many as an independent state.

Some religious writers claim that virginity cannot be considered a status in the world unless it is confirmed by the vow of eternal and perfect chastity. With this vow, virginity is placed in the legal sphere, and only in the legal sphere can one speak of an actual status. A mere intention or a consecration, which one could always take back oneself, offered no guarantee for the permanence and firmness of virginity, which was essential for the character of the state. In recent times, however, we also have communities of sisters who do not take vows, but only promises. Nevertheless, they are granted the status of virginity. These sisters are, of course, under the protection of an

ecclesiastical community. Now, one could also say for the “virgin souls in the world” cine movement.

stage or establish an organization that guarantees stability and firmness to their virgin purpose. There are various ways to give permanence and security, protection and care to the virgin life in the world: Ascetical and legal, pastoral and organizational.

As long as the virgin life in the world is not a legal institution, as it was in the past, the pastoral care of these virgin souls must be especially careful. In the instruction the whole beauty of the evangelical counsel should shine. The pastors must guide these lonely virgins as good shepherds through the perils with special care. If all the sources of strength of the Church are opened to them, they will remain victorious in the struggle. Some virgins complain that they are deprived of the consecration of virginity, while the ascetical and spiritual conditions for it are present. If the virgin souls in the world would feel a little more status and solidarity together, the virgin movement would have reached that stage of development more quickly. The virgin consecration could, of course, best bring the virgin state to blossom in the world.

The number of single women who could not or did not want to marry is currently very high.

so great that celibacy for women has also become a public issue. The view that it is only an exception is wrong. We are facing an alien problem. In contemporary social life we find currents by which many girls are kept from marriage for selfish or pleasure-seeking motives. This sort of “old maids” has significantly diminished the respect for virginal virginity, which is otherwise present in some way among most peoples, in our days. However, this should not prevent the public from promoting reverence for those virgins who, for higher motives that also benefit society, wish to remain single in the outside world. The virgin life in the ideal spirit should therefore not be made more difficult by special burdens, but it should rather be favored.

The ideal of virginity is much more important for society than many people think. The virgin will be less likely to throw herself away if she knows that a precious life is possible outside of marriage. Even if she does not want to remain a virgin forever, she is concerned to bring physical virginity intact into marriage. So the virgin spirit will only encourage the preparation for marriage. The virginal example also strengthens abstinence in marriage, where it is demanded for moral reasons, as the already

the apostle Paul expected. The virgin souls gladly rush to the aid of the family where it has become needy in some respect. They also fill the gaps in social life when society does not want to function properly: through charity and apostolate, through education and care. Also the communities and the state itself have taken many elderly virgins into public service, because it is an advantage that

virgin souls empathize well, sacrifice themselves and endure for a long time.

If one appreciates the achievements of virginity, one must also protect and promote the idea} from which the forces emanate. Therefore, one should remove everything that depresses perfect chastity or belittles it in public opinion. In public opinion the dignity of virginity should be highly appreciated. Such appreciation is not a matter of course. All measures should be taken against seducers and scoffers as soon as they try to threaten physical and spiritual virginity. The sensual sultriness of the present should be transformed into a religious spiritual wave. Legal protection should be aimed at filling public opinion with reverence for virginity.

A virgin writes to us, “The state doesn’t seem to know much about the particular problems of the virgin, let alone

of a special status of the unmarried woman.” Certainly, the virgin can take advantage of legal provisions which are given to the woman in general. The laws today grant to the woman to a large extent the personal rights of the man. Nevertheless, at the present time, social rights take better account of the particularities of the young and married than of the special circumstances of older and single virgins. Virgins have a difficult position in some positions, which should be legally protected and socially elevated. From the point of view of virginity, some provisions are less conspicuous, because they are not primarily carried out in terms of status or personally, but through the profession: Measures for servants and workers, for teachers and caregivers, *etc.*

The older virgin, in spite of everything, is at a certain disadvantage socially. The sister has her veil, which gives her prestige, and her congregation, which protects and cares for her. The married woman has her husband, from whom she may even take the titles of honor, or her children, who defend and assist her. Even though the virgin may have been the more intelligent and the more capable in the world as a girl, she has now fallen behind, which certain confrontations make her unpleasantly aware of. What she has not conquered herself and personally, she now lacks in life. When she

4. comparison of virginity with other stands.

But even though she did not earn a doctorate, she remained “Fräulein Marie. What should be done to raise the virginal state in the world? In the first place, it is a religious matter, which must be regulated by the Church. If the virgin souls were to appear as an ecclesiastical community, this could also cause society to offer it special respect. As a state of perfection, virginity will have to be content with a modest place in the world. The Savior knew this and therefore made the promises for the hereafter all the higher.

4. the comparison of virginity with other stands

The Council of Trent declared that “the state of virginity is to be preferred to matrimony. Therefore, “it is better and more blessed to remain in virginity than to enter into marriage” (Sess. XXIV. c. 10. D. n. 981). This doctrine is taken with the expressions exactly from the Pauline letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 7:38, 40). It does not grant virgins the right to look down proudly on married couples. A mother can personally stand much higher than a virgin. Only the two

statuses, not the persons themselves, are compared by the church assembly. The woman gives her body to the man, but the virgin gives Christ to the Lord (1 Cor.

6,13.7,4). This immediacy makes the offering greater. Virginity possesses the mystical mystery between Christ and the Church in the secle, without having taken the earthly of a conjugal union. Virginity is therefore the pure ideal. It demands of the virgin that she give all reverence to the conjugal dignity. But the ideal is also a model for the spouses. If they appreciate the virginal ideal, it is not difficult to abstain from marriage at times in order to devote themselves to prayer, as the apostle recommends (1 Cor 7:5).

The institute of virginity was the preschool for the monasteries in the history of the Church. As far as it was possible, virginity then soon took refuge in the monasteries. After the monasteries have gone far out into the world in the modern congregations, the boundaries of the two ideals have been brought closer together again. The monastic slogan is: Leave everything! To the virgin bride the Holy Spirit whispers: “Forget your people” (Ps 44:11). It is part of virginity not to let oneself be touched spiritually by the world. Virginity is a piece of monastic spirit in the world. To protect her virginity, the virgin must also acquire something of the spirit of poverty and obedience. By the example of the monastic life, the virgin must learn in the world to strive with all her strength for perfection and to live a hidden life in Christ. The

4. comparison of virginity with other stands.

true virginity lives in the “courts of the Lord” (Ps 83:11). It is for this reason that virgin souls feel so at home in the Third Orders and seek refuge there.

According to Paul, the virgin offers her body “as a holy sacrifice pleasing to God” (Rom ı2,1). That is why they were called “priestesses” even in early Christian times. Although they had not received priestly ordination, they led a life such as was proper to the priest in the Roman Church down to antiquity, a virginal life. The life of the Bride of Christ, with all her prayers and sacrifices, with her consecration, is, as it were, a service to God, a service to her Bridegroom, a cult that is virginal in character. But the Virgin is also a “handmaid of the Lord” and therefore she takes some part in the apostolate of the Church. This help is also a part of the lay priesthood and therefore she has a second similarity with the priests. She wants to practice the magdalities even more perfectly than other laymen. This is required by the virgin spirit. It should be undivided service and the most complete dedication to an ecclesiastical task.

The apostle Paul also advised widows, at least if they were not too young, to refrain from a second marriage (ı Cor 7:8, 40). As far as possible, they should return to the spiritual ideal of virginity. Elderly widows who were in need of charitable

VI. the virgin way of life as a state

The virgins, who were given the gift of the church, presumably had to promise to always remain celibate. Their way of life thus took on a certain resemblance to that of virgins. The abstinence was supposed to give them the

strength to sanctify their widowhood through piety and to perform good works. The example of the virgin life should also be a comfort and strength for widows today.

IX.

PROTECTION AND CARE OF PERFECT CHASTITY

I. The beauty and honor of chastity

In the Holy Scriptures, the beauty of chastity is praised: “O how beautiful is a chaste generation in the glory of virtue” (Wis 4:1). The chaste bride of Christ is like the Church: “You are beautiful… lovely and graceful as Jerusalem”. “There is no blemish on you” (Hl 6:3. 4:7). The virgins must not be tempted to take this beauty in an earthly and external way. Certainly, the beauty of chastity may also transfigure the body with a supernatural splendor. However, the virgin must not proudly boast of any bodily beauty. For “deceitful is grace and fleeting beauty. But a woman who fears the Lord deserves praise” (Prov. 31:30). It would be a grave responsibility for a virgin to let earthly beauty play and thereby put others in danger. “Through the beauty of a woman many have perished” (Sir 9:9). A virgin who would abuse earthly beauty for unchastity could no longer be called beautiful herself. “Like a golden ring in the trunk of a pig is the beauty of an immoral woman” (Prov 11:22). The true beauty of a bride of Christ is in the “interior”, in the “verbor

(Ps 44,14. Hl 4,1). This is the consolation for the virgin, to whom the external beauty was never given or whose beauty

has already faded away. Christ has endowed the virgin soul: “I clothe her with shining white byssus” (Rev 19:8).

“The chaste sex in virtue… is beloved of God and man” (Wis 4:1). “Purity leads very near to God” (Wis 6:20). The brides of Christ are primarily concerned with how to please God. Then they achieve God’s pleasure and it also rests on their whole life. “He who loves purity of heart…will have the King for a friend” (Prov 22:ı1). The virgin souls are in a privileged way the “temples of the living God” and that is why God says to them: “I will dwell and walk among them” (2 Cor 6, 16).

The chaste sex is also recognized before good people. “If it is present, one imitates it; if it eludes the eyes, one longs for it” (Wis 4:1). A virgin soul, which “in chastity is an example to the faithful” (1 Tim. 4:12), means a preciousness. “Anything that is treasured cannot be compared to a chaste soul.” “For a chaste soul no purchase price is too high” (Sir 26:20). “A shining lamp on a holy candlestick” it is called (Sir 26:22).

The virgins do not ascribe merit to themselves. It is said of the virgins in

2. the reduction of irritability

of the liturgy: “But he who boasts, let him boast in the Lord.” “Not he who commends himself is approved, but he whom God commends” (2 Cor. 10:17, 18). Christ counseled virginity and called, pardoned and sent virgins for this way of life. Virginity is a wisdom offered from heaven. “Seize wisdom. It will give you prestige” (Prov. 4:8). Because of this “prudence and godliness” the “wise virgins” are respected, although they belong to the “little ones in the world” (Sir 10:33). “Honor is precisely the portion of the wise” (Prov. 3:35). Again, the Scriptures admonish, “But let not the wise man boast of wisdom, and let not the strong man boast of his strength” (Jer 9:23). All is mercy and goodness of the heavenly Bridegroom. “Because you have loved chastity… you will be blessed.” “Therefore you are the glory of our people” (Jdt ı5,ı0.ı1). “Immortal is the memory of the chaste generation” (Wis 4:1).

2. the reduction of irritability

Those who would unilaterally admire human beauty could easily overlook the fact that human nature is wounded by original sin. Because there is a threefold evil desire in man, he is “provoked and enticed by his own concupiscence” (Jas 1:14). Some believe that man’s nature is too good, and others are tempted and lured by lust.

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IX. Protection and care of perfect chastity

time chased in fears. Desires and temptations are not yet a sin as long as they do not become voluntary. If one were to become unduly anxious, the inner confusion could become even worse. But it would be wrong to give in to the desires for evil by excusing oneself: It is all natural! We are obliged to overcome and control the evil desires with grace. The virgin should be able to form a correct judgment in sexual matters. What God has created and given is not sin. But from concupiscence, which tends to evil, do not be deceived. “Do not cultivate the flesh so that it becomes lustful!” “Rather, put to death the earthly lust of the members” (Rom 13:14. Col 3:5).

Even in early Christian times, people wondered how to reduce the irritability of nature. It was recommended to abstain from meat and other foods that make the blood “wild”. Man should not “come to ruin by the blood” (Sir 9:13), Certainly the thesis that the flesh makes “carnal or animal” has been exaggerated here or there. The effort to keep the blood as pure and fresh as possible reappears today. One would like to reach this by a food, which

approaches the vegetarian way of life somewhat. Actually one encounters there different rules, which were contained in the old fasting regulations.

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One wanted to push back the covetousness also by the fact that one fed the body temporarily less food. The power of covetousness should be weakened or, if possible, broken by fasting. Fasting cures are also prescribed by some modern doctors, admittedly for other motives. In any case, we must again pay greater attention to certain restrictions. Always one wanted to keep the virgin souls from the gasteries and carousals. “Do not compete in feasts” (Sir 9:13). “Those who belong to Christ have crucified their flesh with its lusts and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit” (Gal 5:24). “The fruit of the Spirit is continence and chastity” (Gal 5:23).

It is also not new to warn against poisoning the blood with narcotics and agitating the nerves with irritants. Known is the word from the Old Covenant: “The wine makes unchaste” (Prov 20:1). Ascetics, who did not want to exaggerate and even stood up against wrong views, preceded with the example of total abstinence or the highest moderation. The admonition of the apostle Paul applies to all of them: “Do not become intoxicated with wine, wherein is dissipation, but be full of the Holy Spirit” (Eph 5:18). It is not necessary to say that other alcoholic beverages can cause damage and weakening in the sexual sphere. The natural science has

has shown that other narcotic agents, such as nicotine, have similar effects. Therefore, beware of all stimulants that make

the blood more impure and the nerves more irritable. It is dangerous to work the nerves, which are otherwise burdened from all sides, even more euphorically with stimulants.

Even psychologically the virgin must harden e/was. Let her not be maudlin and sentimental. He who is too sensitive physically and too sensitive mentally exposes himself to some dangers. Nor would it be right to go to the other extreme. The one-sided dryness that wants to suppress ordinary human feelings is also not normal. Just such “unfeeling natures” can actually be surprised by the need to compensate themselves by sentimentalities. For “the flesh lusts against the Spirit” (Gal 5:16). This dichotomy between body and soul is more easily healed if blood and nerves, whose action on the borderline between body and spirit is so significant, are kept healthy and pure, calm and fresh. Then we still need many graces until we control ourselves so completely bodily and psychically. In spite of all the wounds of original sin, through the ascetical exercises, especially through mortification and renunciation, we should bring about a certain reconciliation between body and spirit, a certain harmony in human nature. This is what St. Peter said in the

3. intercourse with the opposite sex

Eye when he writes: “Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul” (ı Ptr 2:11). “Gird up your loins in the spirit, and be sober, setting all your hope on grace” (1 Ptr 1:13). Through this self-control, supported by the grace of heaven, we attain a quiet mind. “This calm mind brings prosperity to the body. But passionateness is like worm-eating in the bones” (Prov. 14:30). Therefore, “walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit” (Rom 8:9. Gal 5:16).

3. psychological moments in intercourse with the opposite sex

A virgin should also be able to socialize with an anne without any impulse interfering that would disturb the soul. If such an encounter is more soul-to-soul than face-to-face, it will be elevated and spiritualized. Nothing uneasy, nothing embarrassed, may creep into such intercourse. Let it be natural and self-evident, secure and ennobled, as befits people of high standing. With what reverence Mary and Joseph met! What a high spirit, the Holy Spirit, always animated the intercourse of saints in the Church!

If a virgin has to cooperate with a man, let it be done objectively and soberly. The providence of God says to the virgin

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The words of the Holy Spirit: “You shall go wherever I send you” (Jer 1:7). The coming together, then, is not guided by a human voice or by a stirring of the blood. It has a purpose, a duty, which demands one’s whole attention. When the duty is fulfilled, one goes apart again. There is certainly no danger in such a relationship.

It would become dangerous only if the virgin wanted to please people especially. Without a doubt, she should behave kindly and nicely. As the bride of Christ, however, she has promised to please only God. In her intercourse with men, therefore, she must be careful to “give glory to God” (Sir 17:25). Then she will not allow herself to be personally flattered or worshipped. “Beauty” and pleasing do not matter in dealing with one’s neighbor (Sir 42:12). She has sacrificed everything earthly and personal to Christ.

A bride of Christ does not seek comfort from people, especially not from men. It would be a nakedness if she revealed such shortcomings. The heavenly bridegroom is enough for the virgin and he is everything to her. So she cannot complain that she is not understood by men. She is the closed garden into which people should not have a glimpse. She is surrounded by the love of Christ and that is why she does not seek human love. “Be careful of your neighbor as much as you can” (Sir 9:21).

3. intercourse with the opposite sex

Paul says, “Avoid those who have the appearance but not the power of godliness” (z Tim 3:5). Perhaps there are relationships that become more intimate, more familiar, more personal. One talks religiously and plans heavenly things. Gradually, however, something resonates that rises from a sultry depth. With beautiful words and pious expressions, however, it is “sublimated” and faded. In such a sphere it becomes dangerous, sinister for a bride of Christ. Because it is mistreated, however, one lets oneself be deceived for a long time. On a beautiful day, however, the virgin has become a “need” for a man, and she herself feels a “certain need” to seek out his closeness and his help. If she does not have the courage and energy to break off immediately, her transfigured nature will soon fade. “Can there ever be agreement between a wolf and a lamb” (Sir 13:21)?

All good Christians are urged to see Christ in their neighbor. Isn’t that what the bride of Christ is supposed to do first and foremost? Some people Christ wants to be even closer to than others: The poor and the sick, the small and the weak. In the superior he is present with a special dignity. It is this Savior in the neighbor that the Virgin wants to serve when she meets a man, a man. As the image of the Church, the Bride of Christ herself must remain untouched, inviolable. She must not allow herself to be influenced by anything too human or earthly. Like the Church, she has to be

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The Church has only two intentions: It wants to promote the glory of God and to be of service to the salvation of people. Her love for mankind moves in a higher perspective. In spite of all kindness and gentleness, she is so determined that there can be no doubt about it.

4. the excuses for the wrong replacement

Some single people are said to want a substitute for their sexual abstinence. They think that they are making a great sacrifice on one side. Therefore, they should compensate themselves on the other side. Without becoming intemperate, they nevertheless give in to the desire for food and drink. In “eating and drinking,” even in physical well-being, they then seek too much “happiness” (Sir 2:23). Perhaps it is visible to them from the outside that they particularly care for bodily comfort. Other people may take offense at this. But these single people excuse themselves: One must have something, too. They do not even think that this state could be dangerous for them. For through mortification and renunciation one learns to control oneself and to tame covetousness. In any case, there is no sense of evaluating abstinence for the formation of the personality.

It can happen that single people feel somewhat strongly isolated. If they have no family, they still desire a home that is as comfortable as possible. With all modern means, it is

quem equipped. To cover the boredom, one demands a lot of sociability. Thus one makes the life comfortable with play and amusement, with rest and journeys. One also wants to

have “good days” and one does not want to miss the “permitted pleasures” (Sir 14:13). Perhaps one no longer notices that this sociable entertainment, for which one spends all too much time, is not exactly highbrow. Of course, this idle leisureliness is not edifying for all people. One may well reply, “Everything is permitted to me.” But with Paul one might add, “Not everything is pious” (1 Cor. 6:12). The people expect the single to do good works and sacrifice for the common good.

In the heart of a single person, it can be not only dull and empty, but also restless. Driven by this restlessness, some throw themselves into external busyness. This has the advantage of being distracting. However, the rush and the overload could increase irritability. This is especially true if one is predisposed to sensation. One makes noise and expects applause. If this effect is not achieved in the course of duty work, one turns to amusements. If one does not achieve the desired resonance with people, one would at least like to enjoy the “fruits of one’s labor” oneself (Sir 2:23). Such people do not suspect what one could have in inwardness. After all, in the soul the deeper and higher forces for profession and apostolate would suffer.

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Those who are energetic help themselves, if they have to miss the help of a husband or children or relatives. Many unmarried people feel the need to be considered worthy of something in front of the people of the Alps. So they strive for honor and power, for property and success. If the undertakings are successful, such people can achieve great things. The public cares less about the motives. Some people are even indifferent to the fact that the piety comes

too short, because they devote too much energy to the trivialities. Such show-offs, who like to shine, can be quite ambitious and stingy, scheming and violent! The earthly attachments become too great and the game of interests captivates them too much. Influenced too far by external things, one loses self-control within. But Paul says: “Nothing shall have dominion over me.

long” (1 Cor 6:12). 5 The wise method in battle

The “undefiled purity” that is to come to triumph must be “won through struggle” (Wis 4:2). He who does not fight will succumb to temptations. “The soul must be prepared for temptations” (Sir 2:1). “Our struggle is not merely with flesh and blood, but also…with evil spirits” (Eph 6:12). It is important, however, that we fight properly. Those who are uselessly agitated in these battles are adding to the stirrings of concupiscence. We fight better when we remain calm.

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Through a good imagination, we can often make the evil impulses subside quickly and direct the feelings to something else. The track is changed and the wagon rolls onto another track. In this way, it is possible to stop now and then and to get out of the way. In general it is good not to occupy ourselves too much with sexual things. A job that fully occupies us also captivates the sensual life to some extent. Distraction draws it away from the dangers. This is why spiritual writers so often warn against idleness. “Watch and pray, lest ye fall into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matt. 26:41). Therefore, “be sober and watchful (1 Ptr 5:8).

Some virgins think that God should protect them from temptation. When the virgin Paul asked for this favor, God answered, “My grace is sufficient for you” (2 Cor 12:9). Certainly, we should be careful that we do not bring temptations on ourselves. By prayer and moderation, by vigilance and mortification, we will be able to prevent many temptations and avoid many dangers. But then we need not live constantly in fears. For “in temptation the Lord will keep you” (Sir 33:1). But it is important that we face temptation at the first moment. If someone were to play with desires and let them rise, it would be much more difficult to resist.

hen. If you get too involved with a seductive person, the relationship cannot be broken off so easily. The beginnings must be met decisively. Half-heartedness could take bitter revenge. “To God the righteous takes refuge, and then he is secure. For the name of the Lord is a strong tower” (Prov 18:10).

Today, these and those virgins think that they can go along with everything. They are lulled into a false sense of security that they will be victorious in the face of danger. But the Scriptures ask the question, “Can a man walk on burning coals without burning the soles of his feet” (Prov. 6:27)? “The wise man carefully guards himself against evil. But the fool sets himself above it and feels secure” (Prov. 14:16). The dangers are not diminished in the present age, but rather increased and magnified. Therefore, the old admonition is not superfluous: Avoid the next opportunity! In this consists the wisdom of the Virgin, that she is quite vigilant. “A wise man is cautious in everything, and isware of sloth in the days of danger” (Sir 18:27). To the virgin soul

the heavenly Bridegroom gives, as it were, a “white stone” which signifies the secret of victory (Ofb 2:17). The redeeming grace of Christ enables her for the victorious battle.

The virgin soul is married to Christ for eternity, and she has sworn undying fidelity to her heavenly bridegroom. With

6. overcoming the exaggerated sensuality of time.

So the virgin is not allowed to play other possibilities. The vow of fidelity makes her resolute, firm and sure in the whole attitude. Even “through tribulations she must be able to pass” “without wavering in her fidelity” (Jdt 8:23) Paul has declared that the betrothed virgins will have less “affliction of the flesh” (1 Cor 7:28). The virginal ideal for which they are so enthusiastic holds back many temptations of the world. The virgin is filled with heavenly goods, which give her the most beautiful experiences of the soul. Should she jeopardize this happiness by imprudence and carelessness? The virgin ideal is the most brilliant weapon for winning the battle with the temptations and dangers of the world. The heavenly Bridegroom “shields them in his tent” (Ps 30:21).

6. overcoming the exaggerated sensuality of time

For many people today, gender or sexuality is at the center of the intellectual sphere. Their speech and thinking, their behavior and aspirations largely revolve around the relationship of the sexes. Man is seen first and foremost as a sexual being. The play between the sexes is what is interesting and attractive: In novels, in art, in sports, in pleasure, in socializing! Many times the attachment or devotion to people is carried too far,

or people are virtually “idolized”. Unchastity is called idolatry in this sense. Man must not become fully attached to other people. For he belongs first of all to God, is connected with God and must remain attached to Him. In order to present this relationship with God pleasantly to man, it is often portrayed as a spousal union. The mystical betrothal or marriage appears as a climax in religious life: In the Scriptures, in the mysteries of the Church, in religious art, *etc.* In virginal continence, the Bride of Christ stands before us not as a sexual being, but as an angel. She has made herself as independent and free as possible from men in order to give herself all the more intimately to Christ. Her example should have the effect that people do not let the attachment with other people become too great.

It has become fashionable not only to cultivate the life of the senses, but also to flatter them and to allow them every freedom. In the process, many no longer distinguish between good and evil desires and impulses that guide the acts of the senses. The carnal desires creep in stealthily. What is not played in and out through the ears and eyes! What thoughts and feelings are not transferred from one heart to the other by the speeches! What moods and desires are not hidden in all the approaches, tendernesses and touches?

gen! What purposes one does not pursue here or there with fragrances and with the gourmandism! Physically and mentally, such persons expose and reveal themselves gladly.

If the church exhorts to the mortification of the senses, then it is condemned as old-fashioned. But is it not important to repress and diminish the desires rather than to stimulate and intensify them? After all, the Church does not want to destroy the senses, but only to win and open them to higher things: The eyes for the light of faith, the ear for the supernatural sounds, the taste for the heavenly food, the feeling for the experiences of grace, the heart for the fragrance of prayer and sacrifice. The Spirit, the Holy Spirit, must reign gently but firmly, and then He captivates even the corporeal. The bride of Christ veils herself to keep away the worldly sensual stimuli. Her deepest being should be undisturbed open to the heavenly mysteries.

It is a responsibility to entice others for evil. One is obliged to be considerate of one’s neighbor’s weaknesses. Instead of this consideration, the modern world creates in some places a delightful sphere of sensuality. If someone wants to intervene against it, he is branded as a prude: The fellow human being should not be so sensitive! One should not suspect evil everywhere. To the pure everything is pure! Certainly the virgin should not see something unchaste in natural things. But one may ask oneself whether the

IX. Protection and care of perfect chastity

Many threaten innocence with their wicked charms without blushing in any way. There a concern for chastity is well justified. The wall that is supposed to protect chastity, shamefulness, is brazenly broken through by many people. With all means one tries to penetrate into an intimate sphere. Should one not be allowed to reject the world? The world simply wants to deny the evil concupiscence. After the original sin, nature is not as insensitive as some would have

it. That is why precautions must be taken and observed. Do not be deceived! We have the graces necessary to become masters of all desires. Instead of seducing people, one should help them in shamefulness, so that they can keep their innocence intact.

The sensual world plays with one’s own love and provokes the love of others. One is not afraid to profane this love and to abuse it for profit-seeking speculations. Why does one use these means? It is the most effective. There are sinister secrets involved, which mean power among people. Many people are least able to resist this power of the sensory sphere. They are attracted, taken in, deceived and overwhelmed, without correctly seeing through all the forces that are in the subconscious.

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6. overcoming the exaggerated sensuality of time.

n. That is why the dangers that threaten people are so scary. Do we have weapons against them that can overcome the difficulties? The secrets of the religious. When human love is consecrated by grace, it becomes a victorious force. It is most powerful when love has become a spousal one through virginity. As long as it retains the ideal splendor, no seductive arts can arise against it. For in spousal love rests the mysterious power of the heavenly Bridegroom.

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X. THE ZEALOUS PURSUIT OF PERFECTION

1. evangelical counsel as a means to perfection

It is not self-evident that every unmarried lady will advance in the spiritual life. If she is displeased or rejected, she may even regress. An elderly lady writes quite sincerely: “I am less pious today than I was years ago, perhaps even lukewarm. Many things do not make an impression on me now.” But she also admits that she has not gone the right way: “I would like to turn back and live life differently.” One who keeps only chastity does not become perfect by himself. One must grasp virginity as an ideal, a/s evangelical counsel. According to the spiritual writers, the evangelical counsel, and therefore virginity, is a means to perfection. With the virginal consecration the perfection is not already there. But with Paul the virgin should say: “But I strive towards it and want to take hold of it. For I too have been taken by Christ” (Phil 3:12).

A virgin renounces not only forbidden, but also permitted, even great and beautiful goods, as sic are contained in the conjugal and family life community. If she wanted with the renunciation only a be

quem life, it would be very imperfect. The intention to compensate with other earthly things would contradict the evangelical advice. It is essential to virginity to free oneself from earthly concerns in order to be more concerned for the

higher, for the spiritual. “The virgin is mindful of what is the Lord’s, that she may be holy in body and soul” (1 Cor. 7:34). The earthly is so transitory and time so short that she wants to hurry in the pursuit of perfection. Half measures do not befit a virgin. She must soar higher. In her conduct she must “keep away every stain from body and soul, and in the fear of God sanctify herself more and more” (2 Cor 7:1). The “fear of God” to which she was called at the consecration of the virgin says a great deal.

Virginity is the “better” (1 Cor. 7:38). The higher rank also requires a higher degree of virtue. She did not allow herself to be bound to a man in order to follow the Savior more freely. The heavenly Bridegroom exhorts the virgins: “Be perfect ” (Mt 5,48)! Through the virginal consecration to Jesus, many obstacles have been removed. For this free gift that she offers to Christ, she is rewarded with a hundredfold gifts and graces. The love that binds the Virgin to her Spouse is the “bond of perfection” (Col 3:14). Her aspiration is now to be an image

Christ. Therefore, it is “concerned about what is true, what is worthy, what is right, what is holy, what is licentious, what is attractive, what is virtuous, what is praiseworthy” (Phil 4:8).

It was cinc glorious grace from heaven to be called and chosen to virginity. Christ then endowed his bride with abundant goods. Should she not show her gratitude for them? Should she not eagerly take advantage of these abilities and graces to make the greatest possible progress in the spiritual life? The virgin must be aware that she is not disadvantaged but favored. It is not enough merely to send

herself into circumstances. They must be an incentive for her to become especially zealous in soul. Gratitude and love are the wings with which “the soul soars” (Ps 24:1). Paul wishes the virgins great perfection: “The God of peace sanctify you to the full” (1 Thess 5:23).

2. the deeper empathy with the mysteries of God

The virgin souls are urged to talk more often with their heavenly bridegroom. For whom could he have a more sympathetic ear than for his chosen brides? “You will call, and the Lord will answer, Behold, here I am” (Is 58:9). This conversation between bride and bridegroom is the young virgin prayer. Virginity “promotes undisturbed prayer to the Lord” (1 Cor 7:35) and even shapes it

intimate, devotional and mysterious. Lovers can already read each other’s thoughts and desires from their eyes. The Virgin prays: “To you I lift up my eyes” (Ps 122:2). Heaven answers: “The eye of God rests on the righteous” (Ps 33:16). The prayer of love is best answered. The heavenly Bridegroom “makes his face to shine” (Ps 66:2). How wonderful must be the illuminations and consolations that he has reserved for his bride!

The virgin will have an obedient and docile heart for her heavenly beloved. She knows well that the bridegroom will entrust her with confidential secrets. In the contemplation of the truths and commandments of Christ, guided by the heavenly light of grace, she receives deeper insights than others. “The Lord’s words are pure words” (Ps 11:7). The purer the heart, the better one will see through them in faith. Contemplation, then, becomes a bridal mystery. Christ

himself says that those people are especially close to him who “listen to the word of God and obey it” (Luk 8 21). “He who loves me keeps my word.” To these souls he promises his own love. He comes and “takes up his abode with them” (Jn 14:23). Christ is himself the eternal wisdom, the Word of God. Virginity has drawn down this Word of God. “The Word became flesh” (Jn 1:14). The eternal wisdom descends upon a virgin.

X. The cif striving for perfection

The virgin’s garment, which she receives at the consecration, is like Aaron’s priestly garment. She can take a greater part in the sacrifice than others. As a whole sacrifice, as a burnt offering, she laid her body on the altar of Christ in virginal devotion. As on the sacrifice of Elijah, the fire of heaven descended on the offering. At every Holy Mass, the Virgin also adds her offering, which, according to St. Paul, should become “living, holy, pleasing to God” (Rom ı2, 1). She renews the request of virginal consecration, “Receive me according to your word!” Christ includes it in his sacrifice, and so it becomes a “lovely pleasing” before the heavenly Father (Eph 5:2. 2 Cor 2:15). In the Sacrifice of the Mass, Christ marries Himself to the Church again and again. There the Virgin also renews her spousal union daily. After each Mass, she can joyfully exclaim with Agnes, “I am espoused to Him whom the angels serve, whose beauty the sun and moon admire. “

Already on earth the virgins can have the wedding feast. The Church invites the virgins: “Taste and see how sweet the Lord is” (Ps 33:9). Christ assures them, “He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life” (Jn 6:55). The Virgin should experience Communion more deeply than

other believers, precisely as the actual banquet of the Bridegroom. For her, the “cup” is truly “overflowing” (Ps 22:5). In Communion, she receives the “grain of the elect,” the

the power to virginity is mysteriously renewed. There the “wine” is offered to her, “from which virgins sprout” (Zach 9, 17). The joy of virginity now permeates her whole heart. With the bride of the Song of Songs, she rejoices at every Communion: “My beloved is mine and I am his” (St 2:16). With St. Agnes, she praises the sweets and beauties of the Bridegroom: “Honey and milk I have received from Christ, and His blood has graced my cheeks.”

In the mystery of grace, the bridal happiness lives on in the soul. Already at the consecration the Virgin felt it: “The Lord has surrounded me with a colorful dress, wrought of gold, and he has adorned me with glorious jewels. “The heavenly Bridegroom says to her: “Hear my daughter and look and incline your ear! The king desires your beauty.” “Come, my chosen one, I will set my throne in your heart. ” Full of joy the virgin replies: “The handmaid of the Lord I am. All life and service, all personal to the deepest, be consecrated to Christ.” The bride should experience in a special way what a glorious thing it is about grace. She is a temple, a sanctuary in which the spousal communion is constantly celebrated, a fortress, a castle in which the heavenly mysteries are hidden from the world.

The Virgin who renounced the world “for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven” also penetrates deeper

in the image of the Church. She is not just an ordinary member of the Church, but a true image of the Church. Therefore, she is obliged to realize the Church in her life as faithfully as possible. The heavenly Bridegroom has gloriously fashioned the Virgin by grace after the model of the Church, His excellent Bride. As the Bride of Christ, the Virgin “must not have spots or wrinkles or anything of the kind.” “Rather, holy and spotless she should become,” much like the Church (Eph. 5:27). So the Virgin joins the Church as much as possible with her senses and aspirations, and willingly allows herself to be guided and led by the Church. Then the pearl of virginity, which is kept secret in the field, will lose none of its luster, and the light of virginity, which stands over the city of Jerusalem, will not be dimmed by any little cloud.

gloomy.

Already in ancient times it was the custom to present the bride “a magnificent belt” (Is 49, 18). It meant not only dignity and selection, but also readiness for a new life, willingness to work, even to fight if necessary. Thus the bride is girded with virtues and graces, as it were, so that she may be prompt in ascetic striving, victorious in the struggle against the adversaries. In their hands the wise virgins carry the burning lamps. In virginal

n love, they have opened their hearts. The door is open when the Bridegroom appears to bring graces and gifts,

enlightenments and inspirations to the soul. In the girding and in the nourishment of the light we can see the spiritual exercises with which the Virgin keeps away the evil influences and becomes receptive to the good influences.

It is not enough that the virgin has once consecrated herself as the bride of Christ. However dignified the state may be, it could be lost if it is not kept alive. If a virgin were indifferent in the pursuit of perfection, the oil in the lamp might run out. The spiritual life might be impoverished and its light extinguished. If the virgin really wants to “keep herself pure from the world” (Jas 1:26), she must do the appropriate spiritual exercises: Examination of conscience, penance, fasting, seclusion, almsgiving, overcoming, and sacrifice. If she wants to “grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Ptr 3:18), a series of spiritual exercises are necessary every day: Contemplation, good opinion, visitation of the Blessed Sacrament, spiritual reading, prayers. We consider it natural that, in addition to private exercises, she should regularly participate in the liturgical exercises of the Church. She must not close herself off, but she must participate in the Church and be an example for others. As the bride of Christ, she is more intimate with the Church than others.

connected. From time to time, a new start, a special renewal is needed. For a bride of Christ, it would be disastrous if love were to grow cold. Therefore, the extraordinary spiritual exercises are also recommended to the virgin: Retreats, monthly spiritual renewal and pilgrimages, joining religious associations. “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by renewal of the spirit.” Again and again “test

what is the will of God, what is good, what is pleasing and perfect” (Rom 12:2). “Do not grow weary in zeal, but be fervent in spirit” (Rom 12:11). Zeal, which is wise, can hardly become too great for a bride of Christ.

There is a danger that the spiritual exercises will gradually become habitual, mechanical. The deeper strings of the soul no longer resonate properly. Is it fitting for one of Christ’s elect to slacken in willingness and strength in spiritual life? Already in the Old Covenant God complained that His bride was too alienated and businesslike. Therefore heaven admonishes: “Serve the bridegroom with sincerity and faithfulness” (Jos 24,14)! “The Lord searcheth the hearts, and knoweth all thoughts and actions” (1 Chr 28:9). Genuine spousal love will always call and carry away the innermost part of the soul. Who should still be personally completely moved if we cannot expect it from the bride of Christ.

4. the beauty and firmness of the virtue attitude

4. the beauty and firmness of the virtue attitude

The virgin life is described in the Song of Songs as spring: “Winter is over…. Already the flowers appear. The voice of the turtledove is heard… the vineyards blossom and breathe their fragrance” (Hl 2,11). According to the prayers of the Consecration of the Virgin, the rain of grace will first extinguish the “harmful embers” of evil desires and then it will fertilize the land of the soul so that the flowers of virtue will spring forth. A springtime mood passes through the heart and new life awakens. It sings and sounds. It smells and blossoms. Moved by this joy, the virgin sets to work, planting the virtues and nurturing them.

In faith, the Virgin has received the Word of God, the eternal wisdom. Virginity is placed in the deepest mysteries. At the Consecration of the Virgin, it is emphasized that the faith of a Bride of Christ must be “whole and full”. Heavenly wisdom is the “mother of beautiful love” (Sir 24:24). This “love is supreme” (ı Cor 13:13). In the Virgin, it is so “sincere” and natural. Even to the other virtues it gives a special touch. The Virgin also knows how great are the promises that Christ has given to His Bride. This swells her hope and fills all her sacrifices with confidence and trust. The three divine virtues, these “fruits of the spirit,” be

thus mysteriously live the bridehood of Christ.

Heavenly wisdom has four effects, which “are the most useful in human life”: “temperance, prudence, justice and fortitude” (Wis 8:7). Temperance makes prudent, so that the virgin rules over all lusts and desires. Prudence gives the insight to direct everything towards God and makes pious, so that the virgin is completely devoted to the Savior. The virgin promises her bridegroom: “I will meditate on your commandments, which I love so much” (Ps 118,47). Christ confirms this in the bridal Mass: “You have loved justice and hated injustice” (Ps 44:8). What the Psalmist says of the King is here praised of the Bride. In these four cardinal virtues, with which the heavenly wisdom arms a virgin, all other virtues are already contained.

Not infrequently, virgins are accused of having only a sense for spiritual exercises. They constantly “jump” into church and make up the number of their prayers and sacrifices into a beautiful account. But they lack the attitude of virtue.

They are not punctual and zealous in their work, and they are not servile and indulgent in their dealings with their neighbors. They talk about supernatural virtues, which they have fetched from heaven or studied in the ascetic book. But it is precisely natural, ordinary and everyday virtues that are sometimes lacking.

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4. the beauty and firmness of the virtue attitude

Piety is not only spiritual exercises, but also exercises of virtue: prudence in speech, readiness to help in times of need, conscientiousness and fulfillment of duty, sincere confession of faults, agreeableness, social sense. Piety includes not only spiritual exercises, but also exercises in virtue. The virgin, who cultivates true and genuine piety, tells her bridegroom: “But I practice your commandments” (Ps 118:80). “I practice justice and righteousness, O Lord…. according to all your commandments have I judged myself” (Ps 118:121). Especially in the bridal masses, virtue is often demanded and praised: “Blessed are they that are spotless in the way, that walk in the law of the Lord” (Ps ı18,1). The more a virgin practices the virtues, the easier it goes, the greater the skill. These habits bring firmness and constancy to the virginal life.

Because the unmarried are “unattached”, the danger arises that they have no order in life. Perhaps there is no one to “buy” their carelessness or indifference. But life gets confused when the moment or chance or whim rules everything. That is why the spiritual writers urge the virgins to set up an agenda, to level out their lives a bit. “Everything has its appointed time” (Prd 3, 1). One must arrange oneself expediently and also have some variety and rhythm in one’s life. “Let everything happen

with decency and order” (1 Cor 14:40). The love of order is the powerful promoter of virtues.

5 The Special Virtue Gift of Wisdom to the Young Woman

What is the way of life, the attitude, that should be peculiar to the virgin? What are the typical virginal virtues? In Jerusalem, the people were invited to appear at the city gate. There they were to gather and wait until the prophet came to proclaim heavenly wisdom for life. Similarly, the virgins are called to gather before the gates of wisdom. They may have to be patient before the closed gates until wisdom appears. “Day by day” they are to “watch at these gates.” Finally, heavenly wisdom shows herself and “speaks herself at the entrance” (Prov. 8:3, 34). “Listen to me! Happy are those who pause at my ways” (Prov 8:32). “Whoever finds me obtains life and salvation from the Lord” (Prov 8:35).

Heavenly wisdom inspires the virgin for chastity, for continence and purity, for sanctification of body and soul. To protect and secure this chastity, the virgin must adorn herself “with shamefacedness and modesty” (ı Tim 2:9). In dress, demeanor, and appearance, let her be simple and modest. Her looks are “be

Her speech should not be “unseemly” and she should beware of societies where there is “unseemly joking” (Sir 23:5, 17. Tob 3:17) This chastity is elevated to virginity by love. Christ declares to the Virgin: “To him who loves me, I

will reveal myself” (John 14:21). For the Virgin, therefore, the motto is: “Above all things have love” (Col 3:14). “Let all things be done unto you in love” (1 Cor 16:14). The Bride of Christ must be aware, with the virginal Paul: “If I did not have love, I would be nothing” (1 Cor 13:2).

Call “prudence your friend” (Prov 7:4). The virgins who have consecrated themselves as brides of Christ are called “prudent and wise.” Those who wish to walk in the virginal way of life must have “counsel to do right” (Prov. 8:14). The apostle Paul warns against haughty or proud worldly wisdom. “Do not consider yourselves wise” (Rom ı2, 16). True prudence is a gift from heaven. Not to the wise before the world, but “to little ones God has revealed it” (Mt ıı, 25). The true prudence makes vigilant: vigilant against the inner covetousness and the external lures, vigilant against the reenactments of the evil enemy and the deceptions of the world! The wise virgin always keeps herself armed. Day and night she must be ready to receive the graces of the Bridegroom. The guides of grace are mysterious. The Bridegroom “becomes

will come at an hour that you do not know” (Luk 12:40).

“Better is wisdom than all precious things” (Prov 8:11). The virgin who “wants to win Christ” must “give up everything for his sake” (Phil 3:8). The virginal veil reminds her of the spirit of arzzut, of “contempt for the world”. Not even for trifles should she keep an undue attachment. Turned away from the world, the Virgin turns up to Christ to hear his voice. The veil is also a sign of devotion to the will of God. Shall not a bride of Christ be joyfully obedient to her

heavenly bridegroom? The spousal life is submission, service, magdtum.

He who leaves everything, not only the world but also himself, he who has sacrificed everything to Christ, will “find rest for the soul” (Mt 11:29). The peace of Christ spreads its breath in the heart. In this peaceful rest, the Virgin is meek and humble of heart, mild and kind toward her fellow man. Pride is called by some “unchastity of spirit.” The virgin graces will not be obtained by the virgin’s own merit. “It is not by our own power that we can devise. Our ability comes from God” (2 Cor 3:5). “To the humble he gives his grace” (Prov. 3:34). The virgins resemble vessels which are as empty as possible of earthly things, “consecrated vessels” which Christ wants to fill with his heavenly goods. The de

6. the joyful anticipation on the pure paths

The more tired they are, the more receptive they will be.

“Trustworthy is the word of the Lord, and all his doings faithful” (Ps 32:4). The faithful bridegroom cannot tolerate that the bride is guilty of infidelities. There he is a “jealous God” (Jos 24,19. 2ı Cor 11,2). Paul is pained that the Corinthian church, the bride of Christ, would listen to seductive people. Even pious virgins are often not completely, faithful to the heavenly bridegroom. The virgins constantly wear the “ring of faithfulness” to be always preserved from faithlessness. “Be faithful unto death” (Rev 2:10). The Bride of Christ must not become dull and weary in the pursuit of perfection. Because of human weaknesses, everything is always at risk. The Virgin must persevere faithfully in spite of all difficulties. Perseverance is the perfection of the exercise of virtue. This perseverance is a

special grace which must be prayed for. At the consecration of the virgin, the Church implores this perseverance with all firmness. But the consoling promise is: “He will give you perseverance to the end” (ı Cor 1:8).

6. the joyful forward step along the pure paths

In the bridal masses, it is often alluded to how the virgins “walk in their innocence” (Prov. 28:6). Their ways are spotless because they have

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X. The Eager Pursuit of V’ollkommenbheit

Observe God’s laws closely. The virgin way of life is cine own way of life, a moving life. The virgins hasten to meet the bridegroom or follow the lamb wherever it goes. They have consecrated and committed themselves to follow Jesus. “To the king one leads the virgins as his retinue” (Ps 44:15). The good shepherd himself takes the lead and enlightens their paths of life (Jn 8, ız) and directs their destinies in the best way. “My sheep listen to my voice. I know them and they follow me” (Jn 10:27). The voice of the good shepherd is so sweet because it is the voice of the bridegroom. With this following, they fulfill the will of the heavenly Father. “He who walks in wisdom will obtain salvation” (Prov. 28:26).

Virgins must not allow themselves to be unduly touched by what is perishable. They should not only be chaste, but also as pure as possible from all stains of sin and error. Untouched, innocent they shall march through the imperfect world. Let them not be too anxious about earthly things. For they are like a lily of the field, for which the heavenly Father already cares (Mt 6,26. Hl2,16). They keep themselves from too much attachment to the world, well aware that on earth they are only “pilgrims and strangers” (Hbr 11,13. ı Ptr

2,11). Especially to the virgins Paul says: “They weep as if they did not weep. They rejoice as if they did not rejoice. They possess as if they did not possess.”

(1 Cor 7:30). By “nothing must they be ruled” (1 Cor. 6:12). “O vanity of vanities. All things are vain” (Prd 1:2). “If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit” (Gal 5:25). How free and exalted is such a virginal life, which has this Christian pilgrim character. The liturgy therefore admires the virgins: “In your beauty rise, go happily and reign” (Ps 44:5).

This independence is not a license for indolence. The Church requires of virgins at consecration not merely virtues, but also many good works. The path of the virgin is “like a morning light. It becomes brighter and brighter and grows until the full day”. The path of life is upward (Prov. 4:18. 15:27). “In works of righteousness it advances” (Sir 3:32). “Make more and more progress” (1 Thess 4:1)! “In good works shall they abound…. and so build a firm foundation for the future” (ı Tim 6:19). “Fiery in spirit serve the Lord” (Rom ı2, 11)!

It is peculiar to the life of a virgin to have a sure orientation towards the goal. This must give the good opinion a special strength and intimacy. She has detached herself from the earthly and transient in order to better strive for the future and the eternal. It has a special vocation and invitation for the heavenly wedding feast. In the bridal masses we read: “They lead her into the temple to the king with joy.

den and rejoicing." "Godliness has the promise for now and for the future" (ı Tim 4:8). "Those who sow to the Spirit will reap eternal life in the Spirit" (Gal. 6:8). This constant view of the wonderful goal makes their service to the Bridegroom not merely zealous but joyful.

7. the ability and strength of the young woman in the struggle for life

The virtue armor is represented in the consecration of virgins as armor. Even the three divine virtues are weapons of warfare according to Paul: "Let us be sober, clothed with the armor of faith and love, and with the helmet of hope of salvation" (1 Thess. 5:8). The virgin must be a fighter in order to resist external and internal temptations, especially the temptations of the evil enemy. "Put on the armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm" (Eph 6:11). The devil, as the consecration preface says, has it in mind to conquer with his wiles precisely the virgin souls. The widow Judith, who overcame Holofernes, is an example of how chaste continence makes one fit for battle. "You have acted manfully, and your heart has been stouthearted, because you have loved chastity. Therefore the hand of the Lord has strengthened you" (Jdt 15:11). The idea was already common in the Old Covenant that through chaste ent.

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7. virgin's prowess and strength in life struggle

The first step is to acquire the blessing for the battle and become victorious.

What Paul says of every Christian life is especially true of the virgin life: It is a struggle. Already in Greece, the scorers often prepared themselves for the battle by abstinence. "Everyone who wrestles in the game of combat abstains

from everything” (1 Cor. 9:25) Through her chastity, therefore, the virgin becomes especially fit for combat. The virginal struggle is described in the Book of Wisdom as a “struggle for immaculate purity” (Wis 4:2). In this contest of life, the virgin must be strong and victorious. Chastity brings courage to the soul (Jdt 16, 26). A glorious prize of victory is promised to the virgin.

At the consecration, the Virgin is implored by the Church to be “prudent modesty, wise kindness, earnest gentleness and chaste freedom”. The feminine grace is sought here to unite with masculine strength. The bride of Christ must be a woman who stands “strong with a manly breast”. As a single woman, she has “no man as head.” Christ, the Head of the Church, with His special grace, grants her strength and courage, downright steadfastness. “God is in her midst. She will not waver” (Ps 45:6). She resembles a city for which God himself has assumed the defense. The liturgy therefore attributes to the Bride of Christ qualities that the Psalmist pronounced of the King himself. Her virtue

carries a certain masculinity without losing the feminine sweetness. A virgin who walks alone as the bride of Christ through a sensualized world needs more seriousness of life and silence, more spirit of sacrifice and steadfastness than ordinary women. The virginal independence and fortitude is based on the hidden “inwardness with the unchanging gentle and calm disposition” (ı Ptr 3, 4).

Many holy virgins have fought a double battle, one for chastity and the other for faith. The liturgy praises it as a miracle of grace that virgins, the “weaker sex”, did not

shrink from the agonies of martyrdom. This was even more than male bravery in war service. Such martyrdom could only be granted to virgins by the power of heavenly grace. For great war heroes, a strong pillar was often donated as a souvenir of victory. With such a pillar, on which the virgin's name of honor is written, the virgin is compared in the Holy Scriptures (Sir 36:25). "I will make the victor a pillar in the temple of my God" (Rev 3:12).

8. mystical echoes in the young virgin life

"Who may ascend to the mountain of the Lord? He who has innocent hands and a pure heart, and who does not attach his soul to vain things" (Ps 23:4). The virgin soul is for a high

The way of heaven. The "Lamb" she wants to follow is on "the mountain" (Rev 14:1). This mountain means the degree of grace and virtue that the Virgin should possess. Christ wants to choose her for it: "You have exalted my dwelling place above the earth" (Sir 51, 13). We do not want to claim that every virgin has reached a special height of grace. But in the virginal state itself, as it is represented in the liturgy, many mystical experiences would be possible. Therefore, a virgin soul must not immediately think of itself as a mystical soul. It would be its own gift from heaven. A virgin who lives devoutly, as experience shows us, can nevertheless occasionally be granted individual mystical experiences.

In the ecclesiastical writers we read a lot about the bridal mysticism. The liturgy would like to initiate such a nuptial relationship when it consecrates virgins. If this nuptial union of grace between soul and Savior becomes quite alive and intimate, supernatural experiences can unfold from it that

are inexpressibly profound. The Church wishes this for the virgins by asking Christ: “Be you their honor, you their joy, you their will. Thou in sorrow comfort, thou in doubt counsel, thou in adversity protection, and in affliction patience, in poverty abundance, in fasting food, in sickness medicine.” In Christ the virgins have everything, and they love their bridegroom above all things. With the apostle they can say:

X. The eager pursuit of perfection

“I live, yet no longer I, but Christ lives in me” (Gal 2:20).

The Virgin was careful not to be joined to a human being. She married herself directly to Christ. In her consecration she came into a special closeness to Christ. She offered her whole life to him. “What she does, she does with all her heart, because it is not for a man, but for the Lord” (Col 3:23). In this immediacy some see mystical echoes. The relationship between Christ and the soul is not to be disturbed by anything creaturely. God immediately touches the bottom or top of the soul. Not the Virgin can grasp it with her faculties. Christ, however, can intervene directly in the life of the soul with his graces.

It is particularly proper to the virginal being to have an open soul, to be receptive. The virgin prays to Christ, “Draw me to you!” It is true that she must mortify herself and pray much until she is prepared for the graces of the Bridegroom. But she knows that she is unworthy of heavenly favor. She must let herself be guided and carried, as it were, by the Holy Spirit. The virgin Scelen can only offer her virginity. The Holy Spirit must fill everything with his graces and gifts. This gift character is peculiar and essential to virginity according to

the ecclesiastical prayers. If only virgin souls were receptive enough. The 168

8. mystical echoes in the virgin life

Virginity is compassion, fulfillment from above. It is precisely for this reason that it is so supernatural, so heavenly, so mystical.

The invitation to the virgins is “Come!” “Taste and bless” (Ps 33:9). Those who live virginally are to feel out a “foretaste of eternal goods” after the consecration prefession. Before the consecration, the virgin cries out to Christ, “I seek to approach your face!” The bride’s Mass says, “God is with her by His gaze.” “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Mt 5:8). “Open my eyes, that I may behold the wonders of your teaching!” “Your revelation, Lord, I have known. Of all perfection’s fulfillment I saw” (Ps 118:18, 96). In any case, holy virgins, like Agnes, had experienced heavenly touches, contemplations and experiences: “Schet! What I longed for, already I see it! What I hoped for, already I hold it.”

From the Virgin, the Church desires: “May she blossom in love!” There is a love-fever in the bride of Christ, which she must faithfully guard. The sweeter the love becomes, the sweeter are the heavenly joys. Christ anointed His bride, “With the oil of delight” (Ps 44:8). “The overflow of the river gladdens the city of God,” “the soul of the virgin” (Ps 45:6). The “fruits” of Christ’s bridehood are mystically “sweet” (Hl 2, 3). For virginity, according to the Eucharistic prayer of consecration, is adorned with the “hundredfold fruit. “

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THE EXPLOITATION OF THE DIFFICULTIES AND SUFFERINGS FOR THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

r. The young virgin soul at the feet of the cross

The covenant was made on the cross, in which Christ betrothed himself to the church as a bride. If the virgin, as the image of the church, wants to mystically betroth herself to the Savior, she must therefore appear under the cross. There the virgin souls come together. The sanctuary of the heart of Jesus was opened at the cross so that the bride of Christ could have access. The virgin marriage is a heart mystery of the cross. The virgin consecration is in the deepest sense a “consecration of suffering” (Jn 17:19). Hence it comes that the Bridehood of Christ is a mystery: a mystery of humiliation and exaltation, a mystery of struggle and peace, a mystery of contradiction and attraction, a mystery of vexation and wisdom. The virgins resolved under the cross to follow the Lamb wherever he goes, even on the paths of suffering and persecution. Like Paul, the virgin vows: “Far be it from me to seek my glory in anything but the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Gal 2:19).

The New Covenant has been made v7 blood of Christ. The virgin is not made with the sacrificial blood of the Old Covenant, but with the

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1. the virgin soul at the foot of the cross

St. Agnes is happy that this blood adorns her cheeks. St. Agnes is happy that this blood adorns her cheeks. With the blood and water that flowed from the side of Jesus, the Divine Bridegroom washed His Church as a bride so that she would not have any blemishes or wrinkles on her. The mystery of virginal purity and spotlessness is a mystery of

the cross. According to the liturgy, it was virgin souls for the time being who “washed their robes white in the blood of the Lamb” (Rev 7:14). “In the great tribulation” they do not shrink from shedding their blood for love of Christ. This spirit of suffering is somewhat imitated by all who take upon themselves suffering and sacrifice for the glory of Christ. Every suffering is a piece of blood, a piece of the personal life force that we put under the cross.

In view of Jesus’ dying, the virgin wants to kill herself ascetically. “The flesh with its lusts and desires” seeks to “beat them to the cross” (Gal 5:24). But if they “kill the urges of the flesh through the Spirit,” they will “walk in the Spirit” (Gal 5:16). Because they offered their love as a sacrifice under the cross, they are filled with the virgin spirit of the cross. Their mortification moved Christ to give them the virginal “garment of celebration” (Sir 6:23). On the virginal life rests its own transfiguration. Like a “grain of wheat,” the Virgin lays her body, as it were, in the ground so that it may die.

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X1. The exploitation of the difficulties and sufferings

This grain will then soon cemporsprout and stand as a beautiful flowering plant (Hl 7,2). If they have “died with Christ”, they can also “participate” in his virginal and transfigured “life” (Rm 6,8).

The heavenly Bridegroom revealed His supreme love on the cross. “Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). If it were possible, the Eucharist would surpass this love. “Since Jesus loved his own who were in the world, he proved love to them to the uttermost” (Jn 13:1). Shall not the Virgin, who admires this

love of Christ, be inspired to offer the ultimate of her love to the Savior. Christ declares, “He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me” (Mt 10:37). The virgin is to “grow in love into Christ, who is the head” (Eph 4:15). Love offers the full sacrifice only in suffering, in the bloodless martyrdom of virginity. They must “bind this love as a memorial sign on their hand, wear it on their forehead, or write it on the posts of their house door” (Deut 6:6).

The world is for a virgin life a milieu that can become very unpleasant. The virgin can therefore lament with the bride of the Song of Songs: “I am like a lily among thorns” (Hl 2,2). How manifold and rich

2. testing, purification and education through suffering

The thorns on which a virgin can prick herself bloody are very hard: Contempt and abandonment, hostility and ridicule, dangers and worries, roughness and failure. The virgin must be able to endure in adverse circumstances calmly and patiently, without feeling oppressed because of it. All together it is certainly like a crown of thorns, which is pressed on her head. Should she not rejoice in this likeness to Christ? Above the thorn bush, God himself appeared to Moses to call him to higher tasks. For the lilies among the thorns the Good Shepherd has a loving eye. With the outward inconveniences the earthly creatures are to repel the virgins, so that they become free from the last attachments to the world. Then they turn their hearts and eyes only to the light that shines above the thorns.

Through their dignity of election, the virgins have become the gold of men. The gold that is taken out of the earth must first be purified in the smelting furnace. Thus, God places

the virgins in the fire of love. “Behold, I will melt you and test you” (Jer 9:7). Now what does this purifying fire melt away? Earthly attachments and self-will, arrogance and frivolity, impatience and sensitivities, false conceits and fears, disordered inclinations and pleasures. “How the gold is refined in the furnace,

so the Lord tests the hearts” (Prov. 17:3). In particular, it is a matter of creating pride out of the heart. “Those who are pleasing to God are tried in the furnace of humiliation” (Sir 2:5). Should a virgin become despondent in the sufferings, she is encouraged by God Himself to patience and perseverance: “Bear what God imposes on you! Remain united with God and persevere in pain” (Sir 2:3). “After they have suffered a little, much good will come to them.… For God has found them worthy of it” (Wis 3:5). The sufferings are a divine fire of love,through which the Bridegroom wants to purify the virgin souls. They should rejoice in this. For now they become “much more precious than gold tried by fire” (1 Ptr 1:6).

Some virgins are imperfect, like the Israelite people who wandered in the desert. Through a long path of suffering, God had to gradually educate them to virtue. How many acts of faithlessness did the chosen people commit? They were often fickle and sullen, not deep enough in faith and weak in trust in God. Nevertheless, God “spread his mantle over the bride” (Ez 16:8). By the providence of God, the people were protected from the enemies, enlightened with revelations and strengthened with miracles. God Himself declared through the prophet, “I washed you with water and

cleansed you…. I anointed you with oil and clothed you with multicolored garments” (Ez 16:9). In pious hour

the bride said, “Draw me! I will hasten after you” (Hl 1,3). Again and again, however, imperfections and weaknesses can interfere, which must be eradicated through trials and sufferings. These trials happen only because God “remembers the love of your bridal state” (Jer 2:2). It takes much for virgin souls to be led and guided as the heavenly Bridegroom desires. The same admonition must always be repeated: More intimacy and fidelity, more humility and perseverance, more devotion and joy of sacrifice!

In the Song of Songs, the bridegroom knocks at the door of the bridal chamber. When the virgin opens it, he has already disappeared. This is the test that every pious virgin has to go through. She is delighted with the first graces and feels the great happiness of grace. Sometimes, however, she lets herself be taken in too much by the palpable consolations of her piety. There is still too much humanity. Apparently, therefore, God withdraws with his palpable effects of grace. Drought and dryness enter the soul. The prayers are no longer answered. The virgin feels abandoned by God. With the bride in the Song of Songs, she may lament, “He had turned away and gone on…. Now I sought him and found him not. I called to him, but he does not answer me” (Hl s,6). The fire of suffering consumes the candle that is in the soul. The heart in the end becomes like

melted wax. When the humanity of the sufferings, which hindered God’s work in the soul, is removed, the spiritual experiences of grace become all the deeper and more intimate. “Trust in God, and he will take care of you” (Sir 2:6).

3. the deepening of the bridal relationship

through the sufferings

If virgins wish to consecrate themselves to Christ as brides, the heavenly Bridegroom holds out to them the question, “Can ye drink the cup which I shall drink?” With the apostles, they will at first freshly answer, “We can” (Mt 20:20). But they may soon learn that it can also be difficult. It is easier for those who have already been destined to the virginal state through suffering or infirmity. The virginal life is by nature one of sacrifice and renunciation. Virginity must be suffered until it is fully understood and more deeply grasped. Suffering makes it much more intimate and precious. Those who are supernaturally minded will not be deterred by suffering. The Virgin knows that the angel is near, who offers the cup of consolation when the troubles and difficulties become too great.

A bride would not be worthy of her name if she did not stand up for her bridegroom with all determination when he is attacked. Does a virgin soul in the world have to

not often have the opportunity? The Virgin defends the truths and laws of Christ, the sacrifice and sacraments of the Savior, and the Church of Jesus. She defends herself against everything that could diminish the honor of her Bridegroom.

She especially rejects the attacks directed at the virgin mysteries in the life of Jesus. The evangelical counsels are precisely those revelations that people are least willing to grasp. Not only with her words, but also with her example, the Virgin beats back the accusations. She is not afraid of anyone in her defense, not even of the great, the powerful and the evil of the world. In the bridal Mass, she promises her bridegroom: “I will speak of your testimonies before the face of kings” (Ps 118:46). The Holy Spirit inspired them with the words, as the Savior had promised. Many virgins have experienced even worse than the bride in the Song of Songs: “They beat me and wounded me” (Hl 5:7). How many virgins have been martyred for standing up for the heavenly Bridegroom.

The heavenly Bridegroom knows well that some virgins have to suffer specifically because of their bridal fidelity: By wanton tongues, by the fire of begicerity, by subtle intrigues, by hindering in communion, by mockery of piety, by treacherous reenactments against purity, *etc.* The bride reports: “I am lukewarm

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he sinners rose up to destroy me” (Ps 118:95). But the bridegroom does not leave her in the lurch. In the bridal mass she thanks the Savior for his help: “You have become my destroyer. You have freed my life from ruin” (Sir sı,1). Certainly, on occasion, a virgin must endure the teasing for a long time. It is not pleasantchm to be constantly ridiculed with one’s way of life. There are even mothers who can be hard on a virgin daughter. The sisters who let the imperfections play out may be favored, and the one daughter may be neglected or censured for her virginal piety. In the bridal Mass, the virgin says, “I cried out to the Lord that he would not forsake me in tribulation” (Sir 51:14). Of course, Christ does not appear on earth to play earthly advocate for the Virgin. But the heavenly Bridegroom grants the Virgin the grace of patience, of silence, of meekness, and the Providence of God will turn everything in the end for the best of the Virgin. The Virgin acknowledges this: “My prayer was heard. Thou hast delivered me from the evil time” (Sir 51:16). Christ did not spare the virgins martyrdom. But with the power of the Holy Spirit, he stood by them, and the glorious Assumption into Heaven was the most beautiful salvation.

In the Song of Songs the bride says: “I will give to the mountain of myrrh” (Hl 4,6). There the my

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4. the participation of the Virgin in the Passion of Jesus

stic marriage takes place. According to our understanding, myrrh means suffering for the time being. Perhaps these and those virgins think that they receive only spiritual joys when they consecrate themselves to Christ as brides. There could creep in a love which is not unselfish. First, therefore, the bridegroom must check whether the love is really completely benevolent and unselfish. Love and fidelity prove themselves in difficulties and sufferings. The virgin must show that she sacrifices everything for her bridegroom, even her life. Did not Christ also endure everything for her, even death on the cross. It is through suffering for each other that lovers come closest. Thus, through suffering, the spousal relationship is deepened. From the fragrance of myrrh, bride and bridegroom are enveloped when the myrrh burns in the fire of suffering (Hl 3,6). From the myrrh of suffering drips the mystical oil of joy, which now makes the bridal relationship much sweeter.

4. the young woman’s share in jess’s suffering

The divine Bridegroom, during his bitter suffering, has become the “man of sorrows” in the “form of a servant,” the “shepherd slain,” the “lamb led to the slaughter,” the “rice from the parched ground” (Is 53:2). Should it not be above all the love of the bride that participates in his sufferings and pains? In the Middle Ages, bridal mysticism was particularly concerned with the suffering of the Savior. The bridal love penetrates into the

the deepest mysteries of suffering. It also traces the hardships and plagues that Christ took upon himself throughout his life on earth. She wants to interpret and

contemplate the attitudes and feelings that moved the heart of Jesus to all the sufferings. The bride tries everything to comfort her bridegroom. What would she do if she could ease the suffering of the Savior? At least she wants to stay with the suffering bridegroom as much as possible. The bride admires especially the innocence and gentleness, the obedience and the gravity of Jesus' suffering, as it is so beautifully represented in the symbol of the lamb. Her Bridegroom truly became a sacrificial lamb, as was already prefigured in the Paschal Lamb. But this darkness of the sphere of suffering is illuminated by rays of sunlight. The bride in the Song of Songs already sees the suffering bridegroom in his transfigured form: "My beloved is white and red" (HI 5,10). The color of innocence and the color of blood unite to give the Bridegroom a delightful beauty.

With the virgin souls, with the Blessed Virgin Mary, and with John, the disciple of love, the virgins often stand under the cross. But they also love to quietly visit the tabernacle like an angel and listen with longing love into the sanctuary. Over the Ark of the Covenant of the Church rests the "glory of the Lord" (Is 4:6) even more beautiful than in the center of Jerusalem. 'Nevertheless

is the Savior in the Blessed Sacrament often so abandoned and neglected, disregarded and persecuted. All ingratitude and indifference the bride would like to replace with the fervor and zeal of her love. They also make reparation and atonement when people wound or deprive the Savior of His Mystical Body of the Church or treat it badly. Spousal love will empathize most deeply with this mysterious love of Christ, whose marvelous pulse we hear from the Eucharist

and the Church. This sympathy, this empathy, awakens the good pleasure of the Eucharistic Bridegroom. “He rejoices over you in delight,” even though in the ‘tabernacle he is “silent for love” (Soph 3:17). The “hidden manna” (Rev 2:17), which contains the heavenly mysteries, will be granted by the heavenly Lamb to His bride, who frequently visits the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar. Indeed, it is given to the bride to be also in spiritual and mystical table and bread communion. She will be able to carry home “the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” as thanksgiving for her participatory love (1 Cor 5:8).

In view of the suffering of Jesus, it is necessary for the bride to suffer with the bridegroom. This is what Christ himself demands: “If anyone would come with me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily, and so let him follow me” (Lk 9:23). The suffering of the bridegroom touches the heart most deeply

of the bride. According to the Song of Songs, the bride tells the Savior: “Tell him that I am sick with love” (Hl 5:8). In order to be conformed to the bridegroom, she also wants to become an atonement. Already at the nuptial wedding, the Virgin took the cross in her arms. The sufferings and mortifications, the troubles and sorrows that the Virgin takes upon herself out of love for Jesus are, as it were, wounds of Jesus, which she now bears in her own body. “With Christ I am crucified. It is not I who live, but Christ who lives in me” (Gal 2:19). Nothing makes souls more similar and united than suffering together.

s5. Jesus’ help for his suffering Brant

The virgin state is described in different colors. One time quite joyful: Heaven overshadows virginity with the glory of its grace. The other time quite gloomy: The world is said to have conspired against the virgins. Beware of exaggerations on both sides. In any case, Paul means that the virgin souls have freed themselves from many earthly worries. Lest they become overconfident, God occasionally takes them to the school of suffering. “The time has come to prune the vine” (Hl 2:12). Christ says, “The servant is not greater than the Lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you.” (Jn 15:20). “For the sake of the name of Jesus,” precisely because of virginity, some will somewhat

have to go through. How many virgins are sickly almost all their lives? Others are overworked professionally or socially abandoned and lonely. Mentally, they may be plagued by dryness, ambiguity, by doubt or discouragement. Should they be surprised by this? The Church has already predicted this to them at the Consecration of the Virgin. Even then, the virgin soul entrusted herself to the Holy Spirit so that he might “visit her in sicknesses, lift her up in heart, and protect her in temptations.” In the consecration preface, the Church asked, “Thou be to them comfort in tribulation, counsel in doubt, protection from wrong, patience in visitations, abundance in poverty, food in fasting, medicine in sickness.” Should it be necessary, God would send special heavenly messengers, visible or invisible, to help the virgins in their greatest needs. “The angel of the Lord will succor the godly to save them” (Ps. 33:8). Did not an angel actually come to the aid of St. Agatha and other holy virgins during the martyrdom?

The bride in the Song of Songs must walk through the dark nights of suffering. “In nights I sought him whom my soul loved” (Hl3,ı). One time she is in the desert and the other time in the clefts of the rock (Hl 3,6.2,14). She is even beaten and wounded because of her spousal love. Her sufferings are compared to waters that surround her all around. “Many waters, however, are not able to

To extinguish love. ” “For strong as death is love” (Hl 8,6.7). On her neck she wears a bundle of myrrh (Hl ı,ız). It is not merely a sign that she gladly takes on the sufferings out of love for the bridegroom, but it also points to the mystery that the sufferings bring blessings. When the distress of her heart is greatest, her beloved suddenly surprises her with his visit. He even does not shy away from the way over the rugged mountains in order to be soon with the bride. Even at night he knocks on the door to inquire about the bride’s condition. With great help he appears. To be quicker, he takes a carriage. The bride may lean on her bridegroom to gain support in suffering (Hl 8, 5). The Bridegroom leads and guides her and sinks peace into her soul. He makes her courageous and secure. Gladly she can say at the end: Strong “like a wall I am” (Hl 8, 10).

To the suffering virgins the word applies: “Do not be anxiously worried” (Mt 6:32)! “Commit your ways to the Lord and hope in him. He will do it” (Ps 36:5). “Cast thy cares upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee” (Ps. 54:23). The virgin must never give in to the feeling that God may have abandoned her. Christ is, after all, her bridegroom. The Beloved takes care of his bride. It is precisely for the sufferings of the bride that the heavenly Bridegroom has a

concerned eye. “The eyes of the Lord look on the ways of men, and he takes note of all their steps” (Job 24:21). At this sight be

6. the multiplication of the suffering values

the bridegroom knows that he feels pity for the bride: “You have wounded my heart, my bride” (Hl 4,9). But he comforts her: “Do not be afraid! I am with you. Do not flinch! For I am your God. I strengthen you and help you” (Is 41,10). “It is I who take hold of your hand” (Is 41:13). “It is better to trust in the Lord than to rely on men” (Ps 117:8). The heavenly Bridegroom heals the virgins “who are smitten of heart, and he binds up their wounds” (Ps 146:3). “From the face he wipes away the tears.” “To the weary he gives strength and fortitude in multitude” (Is 25:8, 40, 29). Gratefully the bride accepts all the help: “Were also the sorrows much in my heart. Your consolations have made my soul glad” (Ps 93:19).

6. the increase of the suffering values by the young virgin attitude

Earthly speaking, much on earth is so dark, so opaque. It seems to us as if a curtain were preventing the full and wide view. This curtain is formed by worldly views and attachments, transitory things and earthly worries. Both through virginal love and through Christian suffering and cross-bearing, this curtain is torn apart. In the heart of the suffering virgin it becomes full of light” (Sir 2:10). In suffering they are better able to understand “the breadth and length, the height and depth” of Christ’s love.

Jesus' love, which "surpasses all knowledge" (Eph 3:19). But spousal love also has a profound vision for the values of suffering: for the communion of suffering with Jesus, for the atonement and satisfaction of suffering, for the personal attainment fruits of suffering, for the example and patience of suffering, for the graces and merits of suffering, for the substitution and mediation in suffering. It is not for nothing that the last prayer of blessing of the Consecration of the Virgin recalls the suffering of the Cross and the sharing of that suffering. This is the culmination of the Christian life, where virginal love and virginal suffering are united. For the Virgin, therefore, it means above all "a grace not only to believe in Christ, but also to suffer for him" (Phil 1:29).

The virgin Scels must learn to understand that it is really a special grace of the Bridegroom that he allows his bride to suffer something. "Whom the Lord loves, he chastens and is well pleased with" (Prov. 3:12). The sufferings are visitations of God, extraordinary visits of the Bridegroom. "Near is the Lord to them that are of a distressed heart" (Ps 33:19). It is good that things do not always go according to the Virgin's wishes and plans. "Man's heart devises his ways. But the Lord directs its course" (Prov 16:9). It is in the "power of no man" to determine for himself "how he shall walk" (Jer 10:23). "The Lord must lend to live wisely.

ben." He himself is the "leader of the wise," the guide of the wise virgins (Wis 7:15). "In the hands" of the heavenly Bridegroom are "their destinies" (Ps 30:16). Virgins are to humbly entrust themselves to the Bridegroom: "Though I

walk through gloomy ravines, I will fear no evil, because you are with me" (Ps 22:4). To spousal love, "the depth and hiddenness of suffering is revealed" (Dn 2:22). "Just as Christ's sufferings came abundantly upon us, so also through Christ came abundant consolation to us" (2 Cor 1:5). "All things are for the best to those who love God" (Rom 8:28). "Those who sow with tears will also reap with rejoicing" (Ps 125:5). The virginal election leads through the way of suffering. Suffering is also a part of election. Suffering people can see that a mysterious transfiguration gradually comes over their being. Thus, the suffering virgin is illuminated by a twofold light: the glow of suffering and the virginal glow.

The virgin suffering has its own merits. The greatness of the spousal love and the purity of the virgin sacrifice make it more precious and valuable. The virginal attitude makes one devoted and patient, courageous and trusting in suffering. With the virginal Paul, virgin souls can say: "I am well pleased with my weaknesses, maltreatments and hardships, persecutions and afflictions. For when I appear weak, I am strong" (2 Cor 12:10).

X1. Exploiting the difficulties and sufferings

“God raises up the lowly and lifts up those who mourn to new happiness” (John 5:10). “We also glory in tribulation. Knowing that tribulation leads to steadfastness, and steadfastness to probation, and probation to hope” (Rom 5:3). “In everything we remain victorious through him who loved us” (Rom 8:37).

Some writers say that virginity by nature has a passive character, the character of surrender and acceptance. Thus, virginity is especially capable of suffering. The virgin soul does not resist the will of God, but abandons itself to God and surrenders itself completely to the heavenly Bridegroom. From above she is seized and taken, guided and carried, overshadowed and pardoned. Suffering and love are the two best means to make the mystical union between bride and bridegroom as intimate as possible. The prelude to the wedding feast is suffering and sacrifice. The wedding feast itself is the fruit of sufferings. Every special pardon on earth is already a piece of wedding feast, which is often prepared in suffering. The sufferings of death are the final preparation for the heavenly and eternal wedding. That is why virgin souls went through martyrdom so joyfully and courageously. The path of suffering was a nuptial course.

x.

THE SPECIAL PSYCHIC STRUCTURE OF A VIRGIN

r. The psychological peculiarity of the older young woman

The virgin, even the older virgin, who stands alone in life, must possess a personal independence. One such virgin writes to us: “We must be much more independent in thought and action than a married woman usually is.” Virgins have nowhere to lean, and in many cases they have no help; they must fend for themselves and decide their own affairs. If they were too anxious or insecure, they could all too easily lose their personal attitude. Of course, they must be careful that independence and freedom do not degenerate into ostentatious originality or quiet amorousness. If she also has her own position professionally, she feels it less that she must also personally depend on herself, is placed on herself. In the fluctuating waves of life it is a great advantage to be a firm tower, a tower as beautiful as ivory.

Seclusion and loneliness can awaken the tendency to move too far away from people, even to alienate oneself from people. The virgin soul in the world must not become world-shy or too fearful. This danger is felt by a virgin occasionally

I myself: aI have become somewhat shy in the exchange of thoughts and venture to work only somewhat timidly.” As far as one has to ward off harmful influences, a certain reserve may be justified. After all, it is peculiar to virginity to bear a seal on its nature. A virgin cannot personally satisfy herself in the Christian spirit if she does not diligently cultivate inwardness. But the hidden life should not lead to the addiction of appearing outwardly mysterious or enigmatic, or at least too interesting. The personal training should reach a certain height, so that one can speak of a self-containedness or skill of the character.

Being alone will not be psychologically sustainable in the long run if a virgin does not have a living ideal, be it professional or charitable, religious or cultural. One virgin tells us, “I bridge the heaviness of being alone by intimate communion with God and the saints.” So, under the wings or in the shadow of the Most High, the virgin feels comfortable and secure. Man must sacrifice himself for something. If this happens in religious worship, the heart is not only calmed, but also pardoned and fulfilled. Even in the pursuit of perfection, a virgin cannot instantly force everything. With leaps that are too daring, she might meet with an accident. The sursum corda is not a swarm and a dream, but

but a tough and determined struggle. Idealism must be guided by practical skill, both ascetically and in the study of life.

From a gathering of single people, a virgin says: “A little more cheerfulness would have been better. Cheerfulness is even more contagious than gloom. A cheerful person creates and benefits more than a depressed one.” Perhaps some have to fight sadness more than they want to admit to people. To refute suspicions of moroseness, it should always appear with a joyful countenance. A virgin remarks: “I try to cultivate my innate humor even as an elderly spinster.” If this cheerfulness is to be fresh and cheerful, it must not become merry and pleasing. If the maiden is also lively and amiable, she remains serious and keeps away from worldly pleasures. Her charm is the oil of joy, which deep religiousness grants. A virgin with healthy piety is a childlike soul, which is joyful, sincere and transparent by itself.

The fear of man should not enclose the virgin, and the addiction to be loved and honored should not drive her out blindly. A sacrificial secrets declares: “The principle of walking the path of life simply, frugally and servantly has been for me the cause of deep joys of life, which a sensitive egoism cannot taste.” The true love of God leads

the virgins out of their own ego and guides them to do good for the sisters and brothers. It is not merely the need to be able to take care of someone. Still less is it the urge to be applauded by people. A higher mission makes itself felt in the soul. So one is also ready for tasks, which can become unpleasant and cause toil and sacrifice. The virgin soul is like a little leaf that wants to carry a branch of peace everywhere. It is a piece of the gift of peace that she herself has brought down from heaven.

No matter how well you mean it, you will still cause offence here or there. A virgin must not be discouraged and repelled by unpleasant experiences. A virgin is expected to have her own art. She should not be too lively or too boring. She must not become pushy, nor should she remain indifferent. She must accept all inconveniences without becoming nervous. She should be able to fit into different circumstances without becoming changeable and vacillating. She must not have any earthly love and yet must reveal higher love everywhere. She must be able to bear everything patiently and silently, and yet she must find the right word of comfort everywhere. It needs not only time and experience, but also grace, until one has learned this calm equanimity. Nothing must ever shine through, as if she were disgruntled or distrustful.

2. the unpleasant types of virgins

ish would have become. A weathered virgin declares: “I am simply friendly against everyone, whether he is sympathetic or evil-minded to me.” A ripe ear of corn should become an older virgin, inwardly as rich as possible, outwardly strengthening and beneficial, an ear of corn which has been left in the field to be fetched by poor people when they are in any distress.

2. the unpleasant types of young women

Some single ladies are bitter because they belong to the “supernumeraries” and they are angry because they are not valued higher. After all, they not only complain about people, but they are generally resentful of fate. In this grumpiness they throw themselves into the world tumult today and tomorrow they retreat into the sulking corner. They repel people even more by being harsh, and in their resentment they become more and more irritated. Full of pity for these disappointed ones a virgin admonishes: “Only do not let yourself become embittered! That is what so often brings people to a great distance.” A worm gnaws, as it were, in the heart of a bitter damsel and will not let her rest. If only she would think: Maybe God has called me to something higher!

Another kind are the “hagestolze”. Their arrogance forbids them to complain in front of people that they have not been taken for marriage. For today’s men

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ner, they would have been too good and too precious. They are high people, so they think, who do not lower themselves at all to the lowly of the earth. In piety, they can become pharisaic or self-righteous, and in social life, cold and dismissive. Gradually they criticize everything without improving their own imperfections. For great tasks, they licensed themselves if one would do them the honor. If their ideas are not accepted, they can save their quick abilities for better things. Since they lack humility and reverence, they cannot become happy mentally. One fact darkens their inner being: The beautiful earthly glass they have in their hands is broken after all. A transformation of their nature would be possible only if they learned to appreciate the pearl of virginity properly.

The world mocks the jaded single people the most. They consider themselves the “best virgins” because they are cold natures. They do not feel urged to do anything: Neither for getting married nor for any other task in life. They cannot make up their minds to anything and cannot sacrifice and devote themselves to anything. They are so tired and lifeless that they are indifferent to the actualization of their abilities. In the whole attitude, comfort and carelessness go after them. The natural consequence is that they remain barren even in spiritual, social and religious life. A virgin laments about this

2. the unpleasant types of virgins

People: “Because they neglect the spiritual structure, they become joyless and apathetic.” If the tree were rejuvenated with virgin scion, it could still blossom and ripen fruit.

The ladies, who care a lot about outer forms, make a long story out of everything. They make such great demands on life that no one would dare to heitate them. For some, the demands are traditional, for others cultural, and for the third, self-invented. They would not have been able to cope with the preparations for a wedding. How hard they have to work daily and weekly until they have their own things in order. Unless they are forced to earn, they do not get beyond their dalliances. In spite of everything, however, they do not dislike being the center of a society for once and make their invitations for it. There they can pretend to be important and tell their experiences in a long-winded way. But nobody gets the impression that they have much to offer. They do not notice that the moths perforate their beautiful dress with which they solemnly surround themselves. The virgin ideals could make their lives more factual and pithy, more real and more promising.

These and those girls, who tried to ensnare people in youth, cannot refrain from their 7beater game even in old age. The game becomes much more insidious now, however. They draw on all means in order to

to make an impression on people: Cheerfulness and touchiness, social interest and one’s own weaknesses and sicklinesses, personal accusations and social circumstances, one’s own experiences and outside help, promises and threats. The repressed love that has been suppressed for so long may shine brightly in some form on a favorable occasion. If the public is not grateful, everything can be thrown down recklessly. Just as quickly it can come forth with a new action to reach the secret goals after all. However confidential the plans may seem, they are not clear and transparent. One does not quite know what is honest and pretended, what is sublimated or simulated, what is jest or seriousness. It is uncanny to be caught in these nets. But what great things could such damsels accomplish if they were re-educated. They would have a ravenous appetite for the ideal.

3. overcoming the psychological dangers

A hundred times a virgin is told to her face that she cannot be used for many things. Some ventures may have failed her. She notices herself that others are more skillful. Religiously, too, it is preached that one should think of oneself as nothing. Through all this, the feeling of inferiority, which under certain circumstances is inherent in the virgin, is intensified and deepened. Wouldn’t the ideal of virginity be suitable,

3. overcoming the psychological dangers

to revive the consciousness of worthiness. In a higher sphere, the virgin possesses special goods and values. There it is also taught that humility and modesty do not degrade, but exalt. “He who is least among you all is great” (Lk 9:48).

The too lively feelings, even if they would go into the sensual, the virgin should hold down. Professional work can be mechanical and boring. Under such circumstances a virgin occasionally suffers from dry work. She lives hidden and receives so little stimulation. At the very moment when she should speak, imagination and feeling show themselves so tired. “A depressed mind dries up the bones. But a merry heart creates a flourishing old age” (Prov. 17:12). The virgin way of life refreshes the life and cures many outward defects. A calm and gentle disposition it wishes to confer, which is an “imperishable ornament.” Especially in older days the virgin sunshine makes itself felt.

Who takes care of the single virgin? Some are sickly, weak or infirm, so they are not on roses economically. Who provides in the old days? One cannot deny the virgin to make a little advance. These and those virgins are also entrusted with the worries of others. Can she let herself be weighed down by worries? According to Paul, the choice of virginity should ease the worries of others.

tert. Whoever does social and charitable work for others may expect God’s mercy to take care of the virgin as well through heavenly providence. From experience, a virgin knows what social insight, how to arrange and shape life socially. Everything helps to get rid of “anxious worries” (Mt6, 34). There are virgins who are still old-fashioned. Because they care little about the world, they pass by technological advances. Some are not given any great task at all. That is why they do not have to deal with life more. Experiences and interests are lacking to a great extent. They have the feeling that they do not need much for life. So the situation is this: “Many simply stand at the treadmill of life, without ideal, almost desireless.” The interior of the virgin, despite some piety, thus becomes eswas barren and empty. A proper amount of energy and idealism is necessary if one is to continue one’s spiritual education, even if the possibilities of advancement are not great. However, the virgin ideal wants to convey this power. The pursuit of perfection also promotes personal aspiration of the spirit. As one social leader puts it, “As long as you keep learning new things…. one remains somehow young and enterprising.” This is religiously beneficial again. “The path of life of the man of understanding must go upward” (Prov. 15:24).

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4. the evaluation of the psychological advantages

If you have a high ideal in your head, you like to judge your neighbor by this standard. This is probably the reason why some virgins are so harsh in their judgment. The virgins exaggerate here or there the demands on others and therefore they are too critical. Many have never quite seen how great the obstacles and temptations of life are. That is why they know too little the moments that excuse this or that damsel completely or partially. It is so embarrassing

when the virgins give offense or cause quarrels with their too sharp judgment. It occurs to the virgin herself that she must temper herself: “The years of maturity make us apply a different standard in so many things. Kind understanding of human action gives us our own peace and a just view.” Scripture would have guarded all virgins from extremes to begin with: “You are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are, if you set yourself up as a judge.” “Judge not! Otherwise you will be judged” (Rom 2:1. Mt 7:1).

4. the evaluation of the psychological advantages

The virgin must not be petty, but she must be generous. Like the stars, the beautiful ideals shine above her head. Some have renounced marriage because they were already engaged in a significant life task. Detached from the petty reflections

ning on themselves, they have a religious and social vision. They do not want to nestle in a narrow circle, but they like to stand out in a wide field. They have a sense and understanding for great problems and great works. So they have plans in their heads. One virgin’s letter says: “Shortly I will write you something about my personal program, which I have drawn up after various experiences.” Another says: “If we are thrown back at the first impact, we persevere in patience and magnanimity, without losing sight of the ideal at all times. “

Once selfishness is stripped away, the virgin can devote herself vo// and completely to a task, to other people. Often we must admire the devoted spirit of sacrifice of virgins: “A virgin must never ask, what do they give me, but she must

explore only one thing: What can I give? This is probably a deep secret of self-education. Inward and purposeful striving alone can bring us to this height." The virgin still possesses an unspent love which wants to give and sacrifice itself. For once, the abilities which have accumulated her strength, as it were, are to be brought to bear, to be actualized. The full commitment is therefore a need for her. She is a grain of incense which is burned in the fire of love for others. Virginity is not a burden, but pure happiness, which makes us astonished: "I want the

and love without thinking of service in return, of love in return. "

A virgin, who has to put up with a lot and who has hardened herself Americanly, is no longer soft and maudlin. She is accustomed to renounce many things and to make efforts more often. A virgin reports: "I had to struggle a lot, a lot. Those were not unhappy years. I became undemanding and selfless all by myself." Another says: "I complain nowhere, however it may go, neither to the relatives nor to strangers." "I also do not want to be too sensitive towards health ailments." Through this ascetic and practical hardening, the virgin becomes weatherproof, insensitive, objective and brave. The apostle wanted to train the virgins to be fighters, who are not snivelling and whining, but tough and persevering, resistant in all roughnesses of life.

A virgin is not a reed that turns to the wind, but a mountain, as it is called in the Song of Songs, which withstands the storms and is not shaken by anything. She is not a reflection of the surroundings, but something of her own, an original

being that can stand and walk by itself. It is allowed to have its own opinions, its own stand and its own direction. The security and firmness does not become stubbornness or closed-mindedness, because it is based on faith and understanding.

trust, is guided and led by virtue and grace. According to one virgin, “It is necessary for a virgin to also have an opinion of her own. The Holy Spirit wants what is right in every situation.” The firmness that is permanent eventually becomes perseverance, persistence.

Virgo is often said to have the special gift of empathy. Because she is not focused on herself, she sees the stranger all the more precisely. Her love is not claimed by anything human. She still possesses the

Heart with which she can empathize with the affairs. Ideal sense and joy of heart radiate from her inside in all freshness. It is like a pleasant fragrance of fine spices, which appeals to the neighbor, which he gladly inhales and refreshes himself with. With these images the activity of the bride is constantly described in the Song of Songs. Since the virgin is unselfish, she does not make assumptions that are not justified, and she does not interfere anywhere where she is not desired. Her only concern is to elevate the welfare of her neighbor by sharing something of her own goods with the soul. The best, the personal and inner she would give. It is something precious because she received it as a gift from the heavenly bridegroom. A virgin imagines it like this: “Like an agent of God, she would have to participate in the

destiny of her fellow men. These neighbors form, so to speak, the Christian family circle, which

$. The reflection of dignity in the soul

God has entrusted to her for care and nurture.”

5. the reflection of dignity in the soul

The bride is the dawn, which holds a mysterious splendor. A color magic, which gives a certain transfiguration to nature, entitles to hopes for the day. From a bride of Christ one can expect something great. Above the Virgin the heavens have opened. A heavenly consecration has descended upon her soul. She is like a sanctuary through which the breath of consecration passes. Mysteries have taken place in the soul, spreading heavenly light and supernatural color. The virginal character should take something of this transfiguring splendor. Through earnest striving for perfection, her nature must be somewhat clarified and transfigured. One cannot be so close to the heavenly bridegroom without receiving a reflection of his light.

The virgin is surrounded by a wall, which protects her from the world. Towards the world spirit she is unapproachable and untouchable. Because she wants to preserve all the integrity and flawlessness. This restraint does not make her gloomy, but only more lovable and desirable. Arguably, she has taken refuge in a sacred sphere of grace. But the bridegroom sends her out again to do good to people. But she does not allow herself to be

XII. The special psychic structure of a virgin

in the world that could be dangerous to her. Experience has taught her that she must exercise caution. This is not yet mistrust, but only prudence and vigilance. Always she remains optimistic, because she is guided by the hand of the heavenly bridegroom. But prudence is the commandment. That is why she cannot be deceived and cannot be disappointed. She is too little close to the world for the mockery of the wicked to touch her inwardly. However, she is so close to God’s beloved ones, the poor and the sick, the small and the pious, that she knows their needs and desires. In her nature there is something invisible and hidden and at the same time something close to the soul and pure in the flesh and spiritually joyful. A certain superior sublimity of virginity shines through, which seems so humble and reverent to us.

The virgin carries a little lamb on her arm. It constantly reminds her not to forget gentleness. The virgin character should be quiet and godly, tender and resolute, refined and indulgent. This self-mastery keeps away the fluctuations and one-sidedness and makes the attitude harmonious and balanced. When the caprices are removed and the desires mastered, Virgo easily gets over a hundred difficulties which would otherwise unduly agitate the life of the soul. She also passes by foreign faults without the water level of the soul showing a ripple. Above the

5. the reflection of dignity in the soul

Hearts shine the celestial blue, which lays a peaceful imprint over the whole nature.

As a deer longs for the spring of water, so the Virgin is drawn to Christ. “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink”

(Jn 7:37). She drinks both at these springs, rest and vitality, refreshment and fruitfulness. Could there still remain any dissatisfaction, even if the earthly desires are not all fulfilled. The virgin can be gentle and yet work vigorously, behave with dignity and yet descend humbly, be reserved and yet venture out to the apostolate. The possession of heavenly goods makes her calm and the love for the heavenly bridegroom moves her and makes her eager. Kingly she rules herself and priestly she sacrifices herself for others. Those who see the modest chatacter of the Virgin only from afar hardly notice the dignity. Occasionally only a little light appears, which lets the inner secrets somewhat suspect.

XII. THE BETTER SHAPING OF THE HUMAN PERSONALITY THROUGH THE VIRGIN WAY OF LIFE

1. the elevation of the wounded nature through grace

Virginity is not always as natural and easy as perhaps these or those people would like to believe. The Consecration of Virgins itself enumerates four difficulties: The law of nature, the freedom urge of sensuality, the power of habit, and the sting of youth. Inwardly and outwardly, then, a virgin may encounter obstacles. It is possible that they do not block the way at the first moment. Under certain circumstances they are not less bad, if they want to sour the virginal life only afterwards. How are these obstacles overcome? Two forces work together: Personal willpower and the grace of the heavenly Bridegroom. The virtue of perfect chastity wants to be personally attained and protected through an ascetic way of life. The love of virginity, kindly kindled by God, is graciously nourished and strengthened by Heaven. The graces of the heavenly Bridegroom will also unfold and

perfect the virgin life. However, the virgin must not forget that her virginal dignity is

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1. elevation of the wounded nature through grace

is a grace and that heavenly graces are constantly necessary for a virgin life. These graces must be prayed for again and again.

The power of the sensual was described here or there so badly, as if one could hardly become a master. If mental or physical illnesses are present, then the doctor must be consulted. According to experience, there are natutes for whom the preservation of perfect chastity under favorable conditions causes little concern. However, it remains the rule that the virgin must face the ordinary impulses of nature with a certain firmness. It would be wrong to play games with sensuality. He who does not observe the precautions, does not avoid the dangerous occasions, does not use the supernatural means, could cause the bridal fidelity to waver on a seductive day. But the virgin should not fall into fears. The Savior told the virgin Paul, “My grace is sufficient for you” (2 Cor. 12:9). The virgin confronts the power of sensuality with her supernatural strength of virginity, the insidious cunning of evil impulses with the comprehensive vigilance of a bride of Christ, the profound and intimate tribulation of carnality with the victoriousness of the mysterious virginal promise. The virgin must herself and constantly have a resolute, a clear and prompt attitude of will. Where her personal

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XI. Better shaping of the human personality

If their strength is not sufficient in battle, the heavenly Bridegroom will save them from danger with His graces.

The most difficult thing for a virgin is to cope with the need for motherhood. Of course, today they are comforted by the fact that they can develop a spiritual motherliness. But today they talk about it in such a way that at every opportunity the beauty of the bodily motherliness comes out. So the virgin could get the feeling that she has only a substitute, ...only a broken piece out of the maternity. This is not said clearly enough, that the religious maternity, as the virgin usually cultivates it in her profession, in charitas and in the apostolate, actually moves on a higher line. It starts from the virginal marriage, from the nuptiality of Christ, and therefore this spiritual maternity of the Virgin is more mystical and supernatural. It is a virginal maternity that could be compared to the virginal maternity of the Church. This virginal maternity is something separate and independent, a special spousal mission given to the Virgin by the heavenly Bridegroom. The grace of this virginal maternity, if it is understood highly enough and if it is responded to sacrificially, can bring forth glorious good works, because it contains the special blessing of virgin consecration.

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2. purification of the abilities and consolidation of the direction

2. the leniency of the skills and the consolidation of the direction.

To the senses, things appear attractive or even magical, which are very seductive. Not infrequently, the senses strive to enclose the spiritual, almost to devour it or at least to

beguile it. Therefore, it is necessary to repress the sensual instincts and to control them decisively. This penance is far from harming the body. The mortification aims only at giving a better direction, a higher meaning to the bodily life. The psalmist speaks of a creaturely urge of the body: “My flesh longs for you, O God” (Ps 62:2). The human body, drawn into the mystical body of Christ, becomes an instrument of good works. The Virgin does not merely place it at the service of the Spirit, but she has offered it as a living sacrifice to her Lord. Not service of the senses, but service of the Spirit, yes, service of God! Already sanctified by baptism and the Eucharist, the body received a special consecration from heaven at the consecration of the Virgin. Just as Eve was formed from a rib of Adam, virginity, according to the Fathers of the Church, comes from the side wound of the crucified Savior. The apostle Paul therefore demands that the virgin must be holy not only in spirit but also in body (1 Cor 7:34). The virgin

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can thus say, “My heart and my body rejoice to the living God” (Ps 83:3).

The limbs and senses of the body must serve the moral-religious personality and fulfill the God-ordained purposes. The affected and sultry, the enthusiastic and sensational should therefore be thrown out and banished. The ear should be cleansed of inclinations, the eye of looks, the feeling of sensations that could harm the purity and chastity, the sincerity and impeccability of the bride’s life. As far as it is possible, the memory must be freed from dull ballast, so that it is all the better prepared for spiritual and religious memories. In the imagination the impure ideas are to be suppressed, so that the beautiful and religious images may shine forth all the more finely. Through all these exercises the will strengthens itself, becomes freer from the bad influences of the world and purer in its motives. When the obstacles are removed and the faculties purified, the spiritual activity of the virgin becomes more lively and fruitful. “The pursuit of the flesh means death, the pursuit of the spirit means life and peace” (Rom 8:6).

This purification of the faculties is not an annihilation, not even a weakening, but only a restraint and a spiritual penetration of the dispositions and powers. The more spirituality and freedom permeate, the more strongly the primacy of the spirit, the

2. purification of skills and consolidation of direction

Domination of the spirit appears. After the strongest urges are subdued, the soul gains self-confidence. The will energy is increased and the moral freedom of the children of God shines much more gloriously. The powers, now purified, function more easily and promptly in winning the personal and seizing the higher. Relying less on the external, the faculties become more independent and inward, and being more independent of the lower, they become more receptive to higher spiritual goods. This inwardness and receptivity, this purity and spirituality, should reveal virginity in its personal splendor everywhere.

Disappointed by the earthly and lowly, man turns upward. For a long time all his powers have been called upon for the higher. The human personality is closed against the worldly, so that it may be all the more open to the heavenly. The disease, which is perhaps more dangerous today than it was in the past, the inner discord of the personality, the disunity and duplicity, must be healed and overcome as far as possible. Virginity is the constant and energetic admonition to direct all the forces of body and spirit toward one goal: Toward the service of God, toward union with God. Virginity is not only renunciation, but above all a firm orientation towards God. Everything in man should be directed to one

Permitted

XIII. Better shaping of the human personality

All the forces should actually work together. This requires the religious-moral attitude and attitude of the virgin, which must be secured and strengthened. The pure man does not flee from God, as Adam and Eve did after the sin. In his purity he stands and lives in the presence of God, before the

eyes of God. Virginity has placed everything in the hands of Christ. If it wants to go to the people, it takes the way through God, through the love of God. In fact, everything personal takes place in one direction and grants to the personality the beauty of order and the splendor of the love of God.

3. the noble spirit and the elevated 5, pannkraft

Heavenly wisdom is clear and loud, something intact and whole. Like the face of God, it shines brightly and sweetly over our soul. Like a heavenly person, the truth, the revelation, the word of God, appears before man and wants to take possession of our whole person. If the personal life is clouded by passionate waves of sensuality, man cannot receive the radiant truth intact and reflect it flawlessly. Only those who have a pure and chaste personality are fully receptive to this divine light. To give access to only one truth in the heart would be mere piecemeal. We have to be in touch with the full and whole

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3. the noble spirit and the increased resilience

Truth, unite with pure wisdom. Truth takes hold not only of the mind, but of all the faculties, of the whole personality. It wants to become our property and we should let it become a deed in our personal life. Thus, the unclouded union of the Word of God with people is a mystery of purity and virginity. In white garments, virgins are to stand before the face of God and let the heavenly light of wisdom shine through and illuminate them.

What has to do with sensuality is always selfish. Love must first be released from these obstacles and ties if it is to emerge from the human personality in all its purity and

beauty. This is the first sacrifice: one must leave oneself. The heart must become undivided and selfless. Only this freedom and detachment enables love to /osal devotion, to full priestly sacrifice. From all faculties, which are purified and mastered, this love is supported and that is why it is so very personal and as high as possible. This full and pure love has only one desire: it wants to give itself to something great, to the finest and highest. There is nothing perfect to be found on earth. That is why it seeks its bridegroom in heaven, where everything shines forth in purity.

It is the attitudes that grant the human personality the peculiarity, the originality. Whoever has the intact

XIII Better Shaping of the Human Personality

The one who has truth in himself and transforms it into pure love, as we have explained, supported by all the faculties in pure work, comes to a noble and high disposition. The virgin spirit is a sun in the heart, which illuminates and warms the whole personality with its rays. Whatever moves in such a personality is not merely pure, but also high and noble. There, then, is the unclouded source from which the highest motives, the purest intentions and the purest motives gush forth.

The worst conflicts, which would absorb the forces, have been eliminated from the heart by the pure human being. It must no longer happen that the powers are misused or directed towards wrong goals. After the faculties have been purified and thus renewed, they can function with their powers and be fully employed. All the faculties are available in all their freshness. Everything is taken possession of and claimed by the virgin man for the higher. Even the lower

faculties, whose powers have been held back and accumulated, are brought out, as it were, and made serviceable in all their urge for the higher striving. Everything physical can be used unbroken as a help for the spiritual and religious. If everything works together in an orderly, purposeful and unified way, the result is a personal resilience which is astonishing. Such a person is strong in battle outwardly and capable of action inwardly,

able and courageous, “like an orderly army camp,” which is praised by the Song of Songs (Hl 6:9).

4. the completion and perfection of the personality

Now and then it is said against the virgin human beings that they must possess a deficiency. For human nature demands the mutual complementation of the sexes, not only physically but also psychologically. These advantages are lacking in the unmarried. This benefit can be recognized without admitting the general necessity of complementation. Indeed, experience proves that many married couples do not feel fully completed at all. There still remains in their heart a district which is unfulfilled. Only God can fill it satisfactorily. We will not have to talk about the fact that people who have disorderly relations with the opposite sex are not completed. These people forgive themselves, fling themselves away, abuse and rob other people, and feel themselves that they have lost a good deal of personal dignity. Intercourse with one’s neighbor, which is all too human, does not complement at all, but it gives away something of one’s own peculiarities, of one’s personal idiosyncrasy. Not being complemented physically does not

harm the human being at all, provided the human being himself strives personally higher and perfects himself and is filled religiously by the heavenly goods and

can be inspired. It is true that human nature needs supplementation. But this can be achieved through self-education and piety. True virginity is not merely a supplement, but a perfection and elevation of the personality.

Errors against chastity result in a person gradually becoming worn out, tired and dull. Purity, on the other hand, not only keeps the faculties healthy and fresh, but it shakes them up, stimulates them and awakens new life. Thus, noble humanity loses nothing through virginity, but gains and is elevated. Nothing noble is thrown away, but it is saved and increased and renewed and strengthened with heavenly powers. What the virgin does not receive from outside, that is given from above. In the heart, that is, in their own home, they possess peace and tranquility after the conflicts have been overcome. This inwardness is quite beneficial especially for the life of the mind, which the women will value particularly highly. The heart, which remains undivided, does not fall short in service to the heavenly bridegroom. Virginity leads to new life, to new growth, to the most beautiful experiences of the moral-religious personality. The virgin is a good field, in which the plans and intentions of God, the heavenly enlightenments and graces are sown. In the good soil nothing remains unfruitful. The seed

4. the completion and perfection of the personality

ner are not merely absorbed, but developed, brought to flowering and maturity. In her apostolate, the Virgin is not only the servant of God, but also the benefactress of men. Even though she is close to people, she remains intimately united with God. Thus, virginity is quite favorable for the cultivation of womanly humanity.

What tricks and intoxicates the senses is only a semblance of pleasure and happiness, something hollow and deceptive. Whoever achieves moral-religious victories can actually only have a genuine self-awareness. Virginity is a dignity which no one can destroy. If the virginal ideals are really to flourish, no mediocrity can be tolerated. Virginity is a constant reminder: You must personally strive higher and perfect yourself! All moral-religious forces are ready for this, and inwardly urge you to it; they must only be properly adjusted and utilized. Through the virginal way of life the struggle for personal perfection becomes more lasting and more beneficial. All forces and conditions thus contribute to lead to a certain completion and perfection of the personality. He who possesses as much soul as the virgin can offer something to his neighbor. Virgo is not only exemplary, but also charitable to people. She stands before people like a celestial sign that draws their eyes to her.

AV. THE VIRGIN

AS A SYMPATHETIC APPEARANCE IN SOCIETY

1. the personal and inner character of the virgin ideal

What forms the essential features of a virgin soul? It is just a single damsel who could not marry or voluntarily renounced

it. Perhaps one regrets or admires her as a sacrificial soul. Under certain circumstances, the beauties or struggles that surround perfect chastity are also in front of one’s eyes. Thus, under virginity many imagine merely an external state. Independence and freedom are its advantages. On the other hand, it does not have the comforts of family life. The happiness of the external state is controversial, and therefore the world understands quite well that such a damsel in older days still marries suddenly when a happy match beckons to her. Can one suddenly abandon an ideal of whose superior greatness one is convinced? The outward state of being single is not in itself an ideal. Virginity is a spiritual, a religious ideal, which is given from heaven and must be grasped personally. Once the grace has risen in the soul, one looks at everything in a new light.

1. the personal and inner character

The world takes it for granted that a single woman should seek a substitute for the family. Some throw themselves into professional work in order to be able to forget everything personal as far as possible. But it is not so easy for a woman to be completely absorbed in her profession. A better way out is charity or social welfare. The single woman has the time and strength to do more in this area than others. But where does she flee to when people’s ingratitude hits her? Thus one envies those who can stay long or permanently in a family, in the family of parents or a sibling. At least they are enclosed in a warm family circle. But how do they console themselves when that ceases? If one seeks virginal consolation only in one’s profession, in charity, or in a family connection, one can be disappointed in the end. The virginal ideal must rest in the depth of the soul. It must not be neglected there, but must be diligently cultivated if one wants to experience virginal happiness.

Not even with the character, with external religiosity or social position one may confuse the virgin ideal. In essence, it is not a remnant of a noble world of ladies and not an appendage of an impoverished proletariat. People should not despise virginity, even if it dwells in the shell of an imperfect character. The peculiarity of a virgin may well remain if she flaunts a virginal ideal.

Sometimes the ideal cannot have such an effect that it destroys all the defects of character. Virginity itself is therefore an ideal. Nor is virginity to blame for the fact that this and that virgin displays an overly original form of religiosity. The piety of a virgin should certainly not have weaknesses and one-sidedness about it. Beware, therefore, of attributing such imperfections ultimately to virginity itself, rather than to its bearer, the virgin. The grace of virginity, which God has lowered into the soul, is also a real and high ideal, even if it is not worked out to the full extent of the actual characteristic of virginity.

Some women are socially afflicted. Physical infirmities have forced them to be single or they have been classified as single because of the surplus of women. Later, they had the idea of offering these sufferings to God as a voluntary sacrifice. Even marriageable women can be prevented from marrying because of great sickness. Some virgins are so sickly and infirm throughout their lives that they could not even learn a profession or practice an apostolate. God’s Providence has destined them simply to suffer for the good of others. Now, does the essence of virginity consist in this task of suffering? Of course, her suffering can be compensated by

the virginal way of life receive a special power and consecration. However, virginity itself must not be identified with a state of suffering. Always we must emphasize: Virginity is a personal mystery in the depths of the soul, which involves heavenly peace and supernatural joys. A virgin who has grasped the essence of virginity writes to us: “I am happy in my state and in my profession, even if I have

to suffer a lot. But that is not the most important thing. I see the greatest happiness in living quietly, very quietly, with the Savior. He is the only one I love, all and only him!”

2. the essential expressions of the young virgin spirit

From the world, virginity is sometimes equated with spiritual motherhood. Even if a virgin cannot be a spiritual mother, she still possesses virginity. The need for spiritual motherhood is most beautifully expressed in virginal activity. The bridehood of Christ is a mystical relationship of grace, a new life in the soul, which the virgin is not only to receive, but also to develop and bring to fruition. Virginity is therefore the prerequisite, starting point and source of strength of a special spiritual maternity. The feminine-maternal being permeates virginity with its

bridal-mystical spirit. Virgin motherhood should be animated by this light, by this spirit, by this peace and by these joys, if it wants to communicate something of its own goods. In this way the motherliness of a virgin receives a special form, its own soulfulness, which will touch people sympathetically. The womanly tendency to a maternal effect reveals itself in an elevated manner, in a transfigured glow. Not merely educational or charitable works are expressions of this virginal motherliness, but every activity of the Virgin for the community. In every activity, the Virgin wants to donate something of her personal and interior, of her spousal and mystical, of her own being and life. Her caretaking is not a governing but a serving, not so much a working out of one’s own needs as an offering of goods, a cooperating in making people happy. What pulsates the virginal life inwardly and

outwardly is bridal love. Because the world wants to enjoy only works of charity, it often does not care about the love of God. If the working is really to come from the heart, it presupposes the contemplative. Many people do not appreciate this truth enough. A virgin’s love of God takes on a special intimacy because it is a love of the heavenly Bridegroom. This spousal strength and beauty of the love of God must be

have the most pleasant effects on most. For the love of neighbor is basically only a piece of the love of God. Therefore, the whole external activity of the virgin shines through with bridal fineness and truth. Therefore, it is not permitted that an earthly spark from the world should enter. The virgin expressions are characterized by the greatness and purity of this love. This virginal love is pure benevolence, without retaining or taking back anything for itself. Where it appears, people look up. Such virginal purity of love must be treated as preciousness, since it is a rarity on earth.

The lovely charms of this virginal love do not allow one to receive it with lustful eyes, or to meet it with a covetous heart. It is untouched by the idiom and it wants to remain untouchable. The spiritual and transfigured is essential to her dignity and sublimity. She is neither prudish nor timid, and yet she does not venture too far out and does not penetrate too far in. Around her everything may be quiet. With a certain supernatural majesty she appears, which forces even the bad guys to reverence her. Nothing naughty dares to come out near her. There are dangerous situations in which only such virgin souls may be placed. In the case of

young girls who are electrically charged, the insulations could fail, be it that over there or over there sparks aut

would jump. With virgin souls, on the other hand, the personal and the all-too-human no longer play a role. The earth lines are cut. Their friendliness and kindness is enclosed in a higher glow, so that they command only reverence everywhere.

Not the physical, which catches the eye, but the spiritual, which is proper to piety, such a virgin has constantly before her when she consorts with people. What she actually seeks in people is not the human, but the divine. Where she discovers Christ in her neighbor, her spousal love shines forth. For this reason, she prefers to stay with people who are especially united with Christ: The pious and the little ones, the sick and the needy. From the people Christ speaks to her and Christ receives her services in the neighbor. The works of virgin charity take on a mystical character. Such an encounter of people is truly spiritual and love rises from the depth of the soul and reaches into the depth of the heart. Since every activity means service to Christ, the Virgin also always wants to do the best.

3. failure or falling short of the ideal

In the letter from a virgin we read: “Many lonely are in the evening after work of gamz

3. failure or falling short of the ideal.

because they have experienced so much sorrow and vexation. They sit in the parlor or in front of the house on the little benches and mope and preach misery.” Another virgin explains it in more detail: “The virgin is often tired and feels old. This comes less from work than from the cold and spiritless atmosphere in which she must constantly persevere.” The overwork in the profession and the unpleasant environment are thus two great difficulties which depress the virgins physically and spiritually. The worldly people, who do not have mercy on virgin souls in the first place, now and then resent this failure. Can’t virginity, which is so ideally represented, give more strength? Certainly it would be edifying if all virgins were great heroines in practical life. The imperfections often stem from the fact that the virginal ideals are too little alive and effective. Physically, one can collapse in spite of the ideals if the burdens are too heavy. Such and such virgins are placed in such difficult circumstances that they must be truly heroic if they are to hide all sacrifices and sufferings. For the difficulty of their struggle, some people in the world might have more understanding. Then, perhaps, they would cheer up the virgins a little by recognitions. After all, it would be more humane to bring social help instead of criticizing their weaknesses.

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One should find virgins, it is explained, who are barren, sterile types. Their professional work is often deficient and for social and charitable activity they reveal neither skill nor energy. Such “maidens” are jaded or phlegmatic. At least they cannot be moved to anything great. If one refrains from mechanical exercises of piety, they are unfruitful even in the ascetic field. The enemies of virginity now mischievously point their fingers at these older damsels: “Now look here at the virgin souls!” But one could parade other rows of virgin souls before their eyes. These are the many virgins who stand on great and heavy posts and do a sacrificial, even superhuman work. These are the charitable virgins and the sacrificial souls, the bearers of an extensive apostolate for the Church and for the people, virgin souls who are desired everywhere and of whom more and more members are always wanted. In the sight of these heroic multitudes, no one can claim that virginity has failed. It is obvious to the whole world that virginity has become admirably fruitful. This is also a hint for virgins who want to excuse their energetic and phlegmatic nature with feelings of inferiority. The prophet admonishes them: The barrenness should “not speak: Behold,

3. the failure or falling short of the ideal

I am a dry wood.” God wants to give them “a better name in his house and within his walls” (Is 56, 3). The ideal of virginity is intended to revive and reawaken the virgins, who are not naturally active and ambitious, and to urge and encourage them to good works.

For a virgin, it is not the hardest thing to begin with hope in the pursuit of perfection and in the external apostolate. Suddenly, however, there can be a standstill that must be noticed. Some may pick themselves up and make new progress. Finally, however, a solidification phase appears, which is no longer overcome. Some are deterred by the fact that they do not experience recognition and encouragement from the outside, but rather obstacles. The others succumb to the haughty feeling that they have reached a decent height and that now their merits for the common good are enough. The third do not find their way in the higher regions of perfection, or they become the victims of ascetic or mystical delusions. These are phenomena which are not at all peculiar to virgins. We can observe them in many Christians. At a certain stage they get stuck, unless they fall back a bit at all. In the spiritual life, renewals and retreats, “conversions and awakenings” are advised from time to time in order to avoid these dangers.

or to bridge the gap. But it is also possible that nothing wants to strike. But this premature fatigue or solidification is impossible if the virginal ideal remains and is fully grasped.

The virgins give away important positions here and there and are not seldom active as leaders in the community movement. This can get into some people’s heads and they

then consider themselves not merely precious, but indispensable. These nuances of social effectiveness can quickly lead to a crisis. However, small clashes between young and old can also occur without the older virgins being to blame. Now and then the youth movement has made the young girls so independent that they reject any care or “mothering.” Occasionally, all the imperfections of the older virgins are singled out in order to expel them from a movement under any pretext, or at least to put them in the background. A virgin complains about this: “In the associations one wants young people. The old ones can disappear. Since then I even have inhibitions. I go only rarely, so as not to be a nuisance.” Now have the older virgins really failed? In some places it’s just a sentiment that has been indulged in out of organizational cleverness. Often one was well aware that the older ones would be more capable and experienced. The young, however, want to be among themselves, or they request

perhaps also speak the honorary posts. Some older virgins had to experience the proverb: Ingratitude is the world’s reward! They should have thought of this earlier. Soon it will become clear that there are still enough tasks that the young do not want to take on. The capable older girls will be brought out again and again.

The virgins like to hear their ideals described so brilliantly. They imagine the virgin ideal as a big tree, which is richly loaded with fruits. Like the bride in the Song of Songs, they sit down in the shade of this tree. Sometimes they think that happiness will fall into their laps by itself. But they forget that a bride has to work hard for the fruits. There is a long

way between /deal and reality. Many virgins realize this: “It is difficult to fully realize this high ideal. Apparently, in few cases is it fully achieved.” But this should not discourage. One’s own powers would probably be much too small. The virgins, however, may count on the help of their heavenly bridegroom. Many virgins have come closer to their ideal than can be judged from the outside. Human shortcomings are only a reason to remain beautifully humble and not to tire in striving.

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4. the translated or false requirements for the virgins

The world is accustomed to judge virgins by their external activity. The cases are also not rare, in which one would like to exploit their sacrificial spirit professionally or commercially. Thus, here or there, the virgins are led to a Betricbsamkeit, which brings with it the danger of alienation. But if the work became too mechanical, one would not be satisfied again. The high demands placed on many virgins cannot be met in the long run if the spiritual strength is not maintained and constantly renewed. Therefore, the virgins are right when they also demand time and understanding for their exercises of piety, especially for the religious morning and evening celebrations. Virgin piety is the inner condition for the outer sacrifices. In the Song of Songs, the heavenly Bridegroom exhorts to give his bride rest as well. The undisturbed rest in God, the cultivation of inwardness is meant. In prayer and contemplation, the virgin recovers from earthly fatigue and strengthens herself mentally for new efforts and work.

Sometimes, however, this very piety is attacked. These and those virgins, they criticize, think that only the exercises of piety have value. On the other hand, they pay too little attention to professional work.

attention. They know too little how to practice the virtues in their work. Their piety is therefore one-sided, merely a piety of practice, but not a piety of virtue. In their activity they are indifferent and careless, and thus they annoy the worldly people instead of edifying them by their example of virtue. Too little has been said to these and those virgins about the importance of conscientious fulfillment of duty. Often the virgins did not have the opportunity to train themselves technically in the professional work. It takes its revenge somewhere, if one neglects the virginal state socially. There the world should only knock at the own breast. In professional work, however, not only the technical abilities play a role, but also the moral and spiritual prerequisites, those prerequisites which are improved and increased especially by the virgin spirit. Criticism often fell silent when the people of the world could observe or experience for themselves the sacrificial spirit of virgin souls during an illness or in another situation. In the Acts of the Martyrs it is reported that now and then the lions, which were to tear the virgins, tamely lay down at the feet of the virgins. God’s grace occasionally made even such critics stop attacking the virgins and even pay homage to them.

The value of virginity does not depend on the external usefulness, on the occupational

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The work of the virgins depends on their usefulness in society. There are virgins to whom Providence has assigned not an active task of work, but a passive task of suffering. Such virgins, who can only pray and atone, suffer and sacrifice, are not useless creatures. The worldly people, who neglect these tasks, should be glad if they are at least fulfilled by some virgin sacrificial souls. Many blessings, which shine in family and society, in profession and charity, are due to these sacrificial souls. This task of suffering is also difficult because it is underestimated or not appreciated at all by the people of the world. Cross-bearers have a mystery of their own in their lives. According to the Song of Songs, the bride is hidden in the house. Through a crack in the door or through a window, people look in to spy the secrets of her hidden virtue and heavenly blessings. If only the worldly people had more interest and understanding for the suffering secrets of the virgin souls!

Some virgins are said to have no order and neglect themselves. This, they say, is a typical sign of old age among single people. Thus the virgins repel sensitive people and perhaps even drive them away. One virgin tells us, “It would be desirable in many places for the old virgins to be a little cleaner in their dress and a little more neat in their whole appearance. ” This

and those virgins complain that they are being eliminated from their youth posts because they gradually seem less likeable. So the problem comes to their consciousness quite practically. It is precisely in such circumstances that it

becomes apparent that before the worldly people it is not virginity but earthly beauty that plays the main role. That is why even the bride in the Song of Songs complains that she has become black or brown. Through her bridal transfiguration, however, she pleases her heavenly bridegroom. The old virgins should take care that they avoid everything disgusting and repulsive through a sense of order and punctuality, through cleanliness and attentiveness, through fine Christian form. It would not be proper, however, to try to please people by ostentation and preening. Since she did not play with sensual stimuli in her youth, her relations with people do not change so much in old age. Virginity gives her a childlike and ideal sense, which is winning and graceful. Virginity transfigures her whole being and thus she preserves a certain supernatural nobility, vivacity and strength, which reminds one of the freshness of youth. The beauty of the “eternal feminine” is artistically represented in virginal purity and majesty. The supernatural spice of the virgin soul spreads, as it were, a pleasant fragrance, as it is constantly described in the Song of Songs.

5. the high esteem of the young woman with her virtues

The virgins should be sacrificial and unpretentious. Of course, they have the right to be kept socially correct. However, the virgins who are self-supporting cannot be denied to render services to the people without asking for compensation. But it is already pleasant if virgins in a proper position do not immediately complain because of sacrifices. If they did not encounter sacrifices, they would already believe that their life was all too beautiful. This spirit of sacrifice must not be abused, for example, so that the

virgins then overwork themselves. But where it reveals its blossoms, it pleases people and challenges their high esteem.

What do the people of the world do with the tedious work they want to escape? They are given to the patient virgins. Who can be put into circles that are difficult to bear? The virgins do not shrink from such situations. Who can be given the thankless tasks? Virgo is less dependent on people's favor. Who can be entrusted to a superior who likes to scold and drive at people? Virgo is hardened and masters such circumstances with a smiling face. The older virgins, therefore, may not interpret it as ill-treatment if

they are placed in difficult circumstances. In this rests an act of trust, an act of reverence and esteem. One can expect more bravery from virgins than from others.

The humble young women are popular because they don't compete with anyone. They have long since forgotten how to argue with others over honors and posts. Where possible, they leave the comforts of the world to others. They do not want to stand in front of anyone. If one calls them, they are ready. If others want to enter, they withdraw. They themselves are not eager for praise. However, they like to pay tribute to their subordinates. They gladly descend to the poor and the weak. In the circle of the simple people they feel well. Since they obey willingly and have appreciation and reverence for everyone, they are often brought up to the great ones. With their simple and servant-like nature, they earn only sympathy everywhere.

Prudence, which is the companion of virgins, makes virgin souls capable of dealing with all situations. They come at the right time and stand in the right place. Otherwise, they wait or disappear again. They can be discreet and silent and yet it is also given to them to find a right word in delicate circumstances. They can fit in and adapt, where one does not forgive oneself spiritually by it. Ge

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But if caution offers a certain distance, they can also control curiosity. If it is necessary, they intervene courageously and push forward energetically. In the choice of means, however, they are deliberate, so as not to hurt or offend anyone. Intuitively they survey the circumstances and concentrically they direct everything towards the high goals. In the encounter with such virgins the world should learn that supernatural prudence can bring advantages even for earthly life. Often virgin souls are preferred for posts because they are /faithful and persevering. One has finally had enough of the changeableness of the young girls, who so readily succumb to temptations and promises. The older girls do not merely let themselves be employed in order to learn something quickly for themselves and to be able to look into many circumstances and gain experience for themselves. They want to serve and offer something themselves, to promote the welfare of others and to help their neighbors. Therefore, they are prepared for difficulties and sacrifices. But they also know that there are similar worries in other places. Therefore, they persevere tenaciously and remain faithful as they have promised and as it serves their rule or their community. God has rewarded them abundantly for this on earth. Who gave these benefits

to the virgin souls? The interior of the virgin is a mystery. Her heart is, as it were, an ent

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$. High esteem for the virgin for her merits

The Virgin is a sphere of peace and tranquility, where the atmosphere is calm and refined. Even the people of the world can feel that God’s pleasure really rests on the virgin. It would be interesting to get to know such a virgin soul a little deeper. A foreboding trust has already attracted many to virgins. From them speaks not only the rich experience, acquired in their own struggle, but occasionally also a higher enlightenment, prayed for and implored from above. They are so understanding that one asks them for advice, and their comfort is so unselfish, because they need nothing for themselves, but want to give only beautiful things from their spiritual abundance. The virgin soul is like a temple standing on seven pillars hewn out by the Holy Spirit. The heavenly wisdom has built the sanctuary (Prov 9:1).

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XV

THE ECCLESIASTICAL SPIRIT OF THE VIRGIN LAY APOSTOLATE

1. the inner and outer mission of the young woman through the church

Through a priest, at the consecration of virgins, the church bids the bishop to admit the presented virgins to the virginal state. The Church reveals here a practical interest in the consecration. These virgins are to perform concrete tasks for the Church afterwards: For worship, in the apostolate, for the

family, in charity, *etc.* For this they now receive graces and abilities. The love of the Bridehood urges an outward service for Christ. Therefore, the consecration of virgins is also a consecration for the lay apostolate and a gracious mission for it. According to the present Book of Consecration, at the end of the ceremonies the bishop authorizes the virgins for liturgical prayer. The consecrated brides are officially handed over in the convents to the Lady Mother or the Superior for care. The leader of the virgin community has the task of caring for her entrusted ones physically and spiritually. Not only in the monasteries, but also in the world, the Church can entrust to the virgins a specific or general task. Such an inner and outer mission is spoken of everywhere in Catholic action today. Especially virginal souls are often entrusted by the parish priests to

chosen to lead, instruct and take care of a group of girls. According to the Song of Songs, the Virgin wants to distribute the flowers of grace that she received from Heaven.

For the exercise of the lay apostolate, the archdeacon Stephen is set before the Virgin as a model. Through her bridehood, the Virgin is said to be full of grace and power (Acts 6:5), so that her wisdom and spirit cannot be resisted. Heaven is open above her head, as it were, and Christ, the heavenly Bridegroom, encourages her to courageous apostolate. Like the deacons of old, the virgins are assigned ecclesiastical, social and charitable tasks. They have not received priestly ordination. In the consecration of virgins, however, they promise their service to Christ and the Church, and thus they become similar to “deaconesses”.

There are ecclesiastical tasks which are more appropriate for women than for men. As far as their services are desired, the virgins are to help and support the priests in their activities. Since the widows can be less claimed for this than before, the virgin souls have an apostolate which is very important in the Church. The virgin is urged to this lajen priesthood more than others. For she also wants to have some sympathy and care for the redeeming love which her heavenly Bridegroom has for mankind.

XV The Spirit of the Virginian Lay Apostolate

One should not mock when the virgin souls are sometimes called “leaders”. Already in the Old Covenant Moses formally chose his sister Mary to be the leader of the girls and women. She had to see to it that they passed unharmed through the Red Sea and through the desert. This sister of Moses, the “beloved of God”, is an example of the virgin souls who are made responsible for entrusted people. In the girl’s leadership, dangers appear which especially the virgin souls with their ecclesiastical perspicacity and prudence overcome more easily than others. The religious-spiritual superiority specially enables the virgins for these and similar guardian and shepherd tasks. May they succeed in leading all the girls unharmed through “the Red Sea” and through the “spiritual desert” of the present time.

When the Blessed Virgin Mary was chosen as the Mother of God in the closet,

ing, she immediately went over the mountains to help her bast Elizabeth. So she hurried to bring her heavenly gift to the people. Thus, it is desired of the Bride of Christ that she serve the people in the lay apostolate after she has received

her virgin consecration. As the High Licd says, the Bride is similar to a deer that quickly hops away. In her bridal beauty and strength, she hastily sets out on apostolic activity. For the sake of the Savior, she must do so.

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2. the basic features of the lay virgin priesthood

The spousal love does not leave the virgin any peace. In gratitude for the goods which heaven has given her, she now wants to work. Through virginal abstinence, virgins have reserved and stored up physical and spiritual powers, which will one day be used for higher tasks. Of course, it is the need, which is called spiritual motherliness, through which they are driven to the apostolate. Supernaturally, it is the special mysteries of the bride which urge to activity for Christ. Thus, virginity has a special social fruitfulness that cannot be quickly exhausted. In the Song of Songs, the virgin is like a tree richly laden with fruit. If people do not want to take the fruits, they are offered by the Virgin in the lay apostolate.

2. the basic features of the young lay priesthood

Many covet the virgin state in order to be able to work more for the church. These are truly imbued with evangelical sentiment because, after all, according to Christ, the “Kingdom of God” should be the real motive. A virgin feels that: “The ideal would be to choose virginity in order to be able to work in the world to a greater extent as lay apostles. ” Such virgins are guided by the intention to fulfill the desires and plans of the Church in all their works. Their effectiveness is

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therefore genuinely ecclesiastical in all its ramifications. This is also given because the brides of Christ are in everything an image of the church. Like the Church, she also wants to be virginal and maternal. The Blessed Virgin Mary assumed the dignity of motherhood only when her virginity was guaranteed by the angel. The Church is first and foremost immaculate Bride of Christ, and it is from this virginity that the Church becomes maternally effective. If the maternal apostolate of the Virgin is properly adjusted, it will not dull the ideal of virginity, but only embellish and vivify it. It is not “the blood and the will of the flesh” that must degrade the virgin apostolate to a lower level. What it wants to accomplish is born of God’s grace, of ecclesial disposition (Jn 1:13). A virgin herself says: “If this intention remains entirely one, this help for the Kingdom of God is a very great enrichment for the single person. “

Guided by the Church, the Virgin considers it her first duty to promote the glory of God, the glory of her heavenly Bridegroom. The whole life must be cultus, worship, prayer and sacrifice. Already in the Old Covenant virgins helped to embellish the divine service with singing and processions. It is to their honor that they are sometimes called together with the priests (Kigl 1,4). How many parishes do we have in which virginal souls have been sacrificed for the

Adornment of the House of God! A virgin tells about her favorite work in the apostolate: “It gives me great satisfaction to be able to make paraments. I have been working for churches far and wide for almost 10 years.” This priestly spirit also led virgins to pray, sacrifice and atone for others in the apostolic spirit. This branch of the apostolate corresponds deeply to the virgin heart. Priestly and virginal are precisely related. Throughout history we find mostly the same conception: if the priestly cult is to be completely ideal, it must be surrounded by a virginal sphere.

In the virgin apostolate, the ecclesiastical spirit is also revealed in the fact that the virgins look through everything physical to the spiritual. The bodily care is therefore not neglected, but only transfigured. The immortal souls are so dear to the virgins because they are bought with the precious blood of Christ. To promote the salvation of the souls of men is apostolate in the true sense. This activity, even if carried out by laymen, has an ecclesiastical and priestly character, and that is why it is actually sought by the virgins. The virgins want to make souls happy not only in the vicinity, but also in the distance. For this reason they are enthusiastic about the missions. A virgin who could not go to the missions because of weak health,

Consoles herself with the home support of the missions: “Every week I sacrifice two evenings for the heathen mission.” Virginity always has in mind the ecclesiastical goals: helping in the conquest of immortal souls, promoting ecclesiastical pastoral care, spreading the Kingdom of God on earth, sacrifice in the perfection of souls.

Where does the virgin find her heavenly bridegroom so that she can serve him? In the members of the mystical body of Christ. The whole house was filled with a fragrance when Magdalene anointed the feet of the divine Savior. In a similar way, as the Fathers of the Church say, those who do good to their neighbor do good to the members of Christ, the members of the mystical body of Christ. Christ, then, is the goal to which such a virginal apostolate is directed. Because of this ecclesiastical or Christian conception, it is a fragrance before the face of God, as it is said of the fragrance of the oils with which the bride in the Song of Songs delights her bridegroom. Thus, every activity of the virgin, whether educational or charitable, familial or professional, is religiously inspired and apostolic. What great things such virgin souls have already done in the parish! What good deeds they constantly direct into human society! This is the apostolic plan of many virgins: “They want to prove before the world that in this way one can become a blessing to many people.”

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2. the basic features of the lay virgin priesthood

The Virgin is a Samaritan and seeks out especially the wounded to pour natural and supernatural oil into their wounds. Such wounds are carried by the little ones and the oppressed, the poor and the sick, the bruised and the abandoned. As God’s favorites, they are the Virgin’s entrusted ones. In them, the Virgin encounters Christ and asks for their services. This apostolic service is the true social spirit. For social activity is about healing the wounds of society. The Virgin thinks not only of physical and social wounds, but also of spiritual illnesses. She wants to imitate the Good Shepherd, to which she is invited by liturgical texts. Therefore, they pray for the conversion of sinners, for

the return of the lost, for the new salvation of the indifferent, and for the uplifting of the weary and lame. In a letter it is said of the Virgin: “She must have only one passion: To establish justice and support the weak, to bring home the lost and to reconcile hostile people among themselves.” What social welfare in all periods of Christian history owes to the virgins can hardly be surveyed, counted, and described.

If a virgin has this ecclesiastical, religious, apostolic and priestly sense, she will want to collaborate in making culture not purely material, but worldly

and Christian understanding. Whoever wants to be a bearer of light and a giver of grace among people must not pass by the renewal of the culture indifferently. The one who is inwardly detached and spiritualized, and has only the religious and sacred in mind, will be better able to explore the mysteries of God in cultural work, better able to shape the eternal beauties, better able to reveal the subtleties of the spirit, better able to find the Christian high paths, and better able to cultivate noble humanity. Virgin purity, beauty and depth, virgin clarity, aspiration and devotion are undoubtedly high cultural ideals and precious cultural values and apostolic cultural goals. It is not without reason that it has often been precisely virgin spirits who have brought forth brilliant cultural achievements.

3. apostolic favorite areas of the young women

In the social life there are gaps which have to be filled, embarrassments which were not foreseen, misfortunes by which one is suddenly surprised, unpleasant situations in which nobody wants to stand. A thousand cases could be

listed, which happen against the plan. Whom can one call for help in these difficulties? Some say that the “thousand cases” are the domain of women, especially virgins. For the unforeseen, the virgins are by nature provided. Every case is a call from God to the virgin and

every help out in such need is a special act of love. Since the virgin is less earthly bound, she is available just for such irregular cases. However, the constant assistance is possible only for those virgins who are provided for themselves. Many virgins today are in a regular profession. Even extraordinary cases usually cannot be treated without knowing certain technical rules of care. The intuitive abilities of the Virgo cannot, in general, replace the professional qualities.

A virgin writes: “The profession as such would not have satisfied me if I had not found the opportunity to use my knowledge in charitable activity. Little by little, a powerful longing awoke in me to devote myself unselfishly to charity.” Another explains: “I satisfied the longing for charitable activity by helping in the parish apostolate! From such sayings it is evident that in the virgin soul there rests a deep need for charity. If they only wanted to flee with charity from better settling in and feeling their way into the profession, this would of course not be ideal. In general, however, the Virgin is about offering something voluntary from the works of mercy to the heavenly Bridegroom in addition to the duties of the profession. By charity in the broader sense, the Virgin means, of course, any service of love or social service that can be accomplished through self-sacrifice.

The first is that which receives a charitable character through piety or unselfishness, through pious intention or special devotion. In disgusting or repulsive cases, it becomes especially clear that only a supernatural love urges one to care. Today, charity demands not only to take care of the misery, but also to remove the causes, thus preventing the evils. If one has a wider perspective, the charitable feeling will come into its own in this work.

Family assistance is the best way to satisfy a virgin. Many a daughter was not only a benefactor for her own family, but the real savior. Even if they have to make sacrifices, they feel happy about it: “I was happy to keep the home for my parents. I wanted to be not only a support for them, but also a ray of sunshine.” If there were personal problems in a family, it was often the virgin who was able to mediate and complement them very wisely: “My mother and I were able to talk to each other in depth. This enabled us to tolerate our father’s one-sidedness and idiosyncrasies well. It was a beautiful, peaceful time.” These and those virgins, as “aunts of the house,” possess a great trust. If they really take advantage of it for the good of the family, they can render the finest services to a family. Of course, the danger then arises that the virgin herself may become too attached to family life.

3. apostolic favorite areas of the Virgin

The virgin, who has actually renounced family life, must not let herself be earthly bound again. The connection to a family can bring great comfort to servants, pensioners or caregivers. But the earthly detachment, freedom and

spiritual superiority must always be preserved by the virgin soul. What they do for the family, be they elder daughters, domestic servants or relatives, has for them a certain charitable or apostolic character. If circumstances demand it, they must also be able to separate from the family in order to serve the people as a single person. However, promoting the family is also the most important social apostolate. In many cases, the happiness of a family cannot be maintained unless virgin help supplements the deficiencies.

Nowhere does a spiritual encounter become more profound than when people educate each other. A good educator has the children in her hands and can lead them to a certain personal height and to later family and social happiness. Virgins should be specially qualified for educational work when they have tried all means in their own struggle and tested all views and methods. The virgin is expected to be completely unselfish in her educational work and to strive only for the best of those entrusted to her. This earns her the unique confidence that the

The virgin is independent enough that she can warn the entrusted ones of all dangers. The virgin is independent enough that she can warn the entrusted from all dangers, and at the same time she is ideal enough that she can also lead people up to a higher level of humanity. That is why many virgin souls can achieve brilliant success in education. Because they were so highly regarded as human beings, they were often chosen by the disciples as advisors for life.

4. the good example in young free servitude

A number of people remain single and live virginally in order to be able to devote themselves fully and exclusively to a particular office, a particular task. Virginity is called “undivided service” by these and those writers. Both are then taken together, the service to God and the service to the neighbor. Of course, there is no question that contemplation is more important than work. Marian zeal must be animated by Marian faith, charity must be nourished by the love of God, spiritual maternity must be ennobled by virginity, and concern for the salvation of souls must be fertilized by a dedication to the glory of God. This is precisely the merit of virginal maidenhood, that it is fed by higher sources. The servitude into which the bride of Christ enters

4. the good example in virgin servitude

The consecration of virgins is a personal dependence and bondage. It is not a degradation, but an elevation and election, not an enslavement, but a peeling away and liberation, because it is a relationship of service with God. The virgin promises to the heavenly bridegroom not merely some goods or works, but all her possessions and all her work activity, not merely individual external services, but all her abilities and powers, her whole personality. The veil indicates that through the spousal union Christ has become in a special way their head, their Lord and Master. The vow of service must now become effective and fruitful under these perspectives: In worship, in vocation, in apostolate, in good works. The virginal servitude is characterized by special zeal, by the spousal love and by the ecclesiastical attitude.

With all her heart the bride strives to become as similar as possible to her heavenly bridegroom. Through virginity, she has become more like him than others, and through the spirit of sacrifice, she is also to become like him, even if it goes as far as a bloodless martyrdom or finally a bloody martyrdom. Her principle is: Not I live, but Christ lives in me. Christ's attitudes must be their attitudes, Christ's desires their desires, if possible, and Christ's love their love, Christ's compassion their compassion, Christ's mercy their compassion, Christ's love their love.

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The following of the Lamb, which is promised to her, must become her mercy. The following of the Lamb, which she promised and which is promised to her, must become the most perfect imitation of Jesus. Just as Jesus continues to be redemptively active in the Church, so the Virgin wants to cooperate with the Church in the lay apostolate. Her life should become as much as possible an image of Jesus' life and her being as much as possible the figure of Jesus. As the Good Shepherd sacrifices everything for his sheep, so she wants to do everything for her fellow men: In the family, in the community, in the profession or in the apostolate, in charity or in education. This is where everything comes into play, where the Church brings the fruits of salvation to the people, and where it calls for the help of the laity. What norms, what rules should be given to the Virgin so that her activity is carried out in the best way? The virgin way of life is an evangelical way of life. After all, virginity is an evangelical advice. The eternal and perfect chastity has strengthened her interior and so she can do more in the apostolate than others. In this she already had a certain detachment from the world, and so she is more willing to

sacrifice and give much of her goods. In all her activity she lets herself be guided by the commandments of God, by the providences of God’s providence, by the directions of the Church, because she does not merely want to obey her heavenly Spouse, but to do everything for His sake. The virginal activity must be in harmony with the

Kingdom of God, since she became a virgin for the sake of the “Kingdom of Heaven”. In this sense, the virgin life should become the revelation of a special power of God, a certain realization of the Gospel. A messenger of heaven is the virgin who brings a good news to people by her example, by her teachings and especially by her work. In fact, she then becomes the bearer of light and the giver of joy.

The Virgin is entrusted with natural and supernatural talents, human and heavenly goods. She has the mission from her bridegroom to manage everything well and make it fruitful. Would Christ be satisfied if she buried the talents or left them fallow? Could she boast of her spousal love if she did not take advantage of all the possibilities of the apostolate? By doing good, she should win people for heaven. Everything earthly is to be transformed into heavenly treasures. If it has to give an account of its administration, its faithfulness and prudence will be asked first. This is probably why virgins have been compared to the good steward in the Gospel. If the virgin is faithful and prudent, she delights in the spiritual and corporal works of mercy, and her work activity is always ecclesiastical and apostolic in attitude. In justice and holiness she should stand among men.

Then she will not lack the virtues that are necessary for leading or directing something: Humility and patience, mercy and generosity, vigilance and perseverance and selflessness.

In any case, it would be intolerable for a Virgo to have a dichotomy between her words and her deeds, between her inner attitude and her outer life. In short, the virgin is expected to set a good example. Today, people are sensitive to the fact that the evangelical ideals are reflected in practical life. In particular, one would like to be able to reap the social fruits of personal idealism in abundance. If it is really true that virginity contributes so much to the formation of the personality, then virginal behavior and activity will be something fine and edifying. The virginal ideals should manifest and prove themselves in good works. If the burning lamp is the symbol of a virgin, the world would also like to see how the little light shines among people.

The writers, who are primarily psychologically minded, wonder somewhat anxiously whether the woman’s needs are fulfilled in the virgin life. Does the virginal way of life correspond exactly to the womanly nature? To be able to answer this question,

Some of them examine in detail women’s views and perceptions, women’s feelings and desires. The womanly peculiarity must be addressed and satisfied. The noble humanity of the woman must not be endangered in any

case. The needs of women are then emphasized so strongly that a certain selfishness, perhaps a concession to all too earthly aspirations, shimmers through. Some virgins feel that this is the core of the inner struggle: “One’s own self must always be silenced so that the better self can become active. The psychic-womanly characteristic, to which so much attention is paid today, is elevated by virginity into a higher sphere of life. The brave virgin is ready to work her way up to this personal height with supernatural help. Of this self-education and apostolate, a virgin says: “There the virgin, admittedly often with hard struggle, can bring her motherliness to the most beautiful maturity.” Certainly no one has such a unique understanding of womanhood as the heavenly Bridegroom. Thus, womanly humanity, insofar as it is truly good disposition, is not merely guaranteed but ennobled and ennobled by the Bridehood of Christ and by the virginal apostolate. The superior virgin appears to others with her practical life as a “sign of salvation and faith”. It is not merely possible,

but psychologically good, genuinely human and genuinely womanly.

The seed of the Word of God, which heaven scatters on the virgin soil, is not only greedily received by the virgin, but also transformed, multiplied and given to others. In spousal love, the Virgin surrenders herself to the plans and intentions of God, to the guides and providences of the heavenly Bridegroom. In the virginal life of grace and virtue, everything receives maturity and beauty, human form and spiritual consecration. The caritas of the Holy Spirit, which is poured out on the Virgin in a special measure, grants the

Bride a virginal vitality. In a spousal and priestly manner, therefore, the Virgin in her apostolate becomes the giver of higher life, the caretaker and preserver of soul life. From the psychic point of view, these are functions which not only awaken the feminine being, but also make it happy by radiating it back. In the supernatural field, the gain consists in the fact that one receives more than one radiates. Once one is detached in this way and has risen so high, one basically experiences not disappointment but satisfaction and enrichment. The experiences, adventures and pardons constantly increase the maternal fertility of the virgin.

Somewhat suspiciously, the modern world asks: Doesn’t the heart, the mind, come too close?

briefly? This is precisely what is desired from the Virgin in the apostolate: she should come close to us as a human being, without allowing herself to be touched too humanly. The earth is a vale of tears, and we need virgins for whom the “realm of tears” is a dear field of work. In compassion and mercy she should give consolation. Why should she not let her heart play in virginal purity? Her heavenly bridegroom is the Good Samaritan. Therefore, the virgin must be possessed by the spirit of mercy, and this spirit of consolation urges her to the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. Virginity ensures that this human empathy and compassion always remains above the sensual and humanly independent. In this sense, a virgin writes: “Even if one means well with people, joy and satisfaction must be sought in detachment from people and from the human. The freedom of God’s children should be preserved.” In the Song of Songs, the Bride offers the cup of comfort and joy to

mankind. She does not have to have it refilled with earthly things if it should become empty. It is filled again with the grape juice that the heavenly Bridegroom squeezed out in suffering.

The virgin wants to possess a /deal that is certainly greater than her. Infinitely high above her stands the bridegroom as a heavenly ideal that could not be more glorious. Moves her serving

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Even in small things, the goal and the purpose must be great. She gladly condescends to the little ones, to the defenseless and the needy. The joy of this charity, however, lies in the fact that it serves the Most High. That is why she remained a simple and plain virgin, in order to place herself entirely at the disposal of the Highest, in order to allow herself to be fully occupied. She aims at the most difficult and the deepest, and for this she offers the innermost, the most personal and the finest. The triumph of her activity is the full selflessness, the whole devotion and the highest spirit of sacrifice. One virgin remarks: “Thank God that, in spite of all the disappointments, I always felt the lay apostolate as a duty and practiced it zealously.” Another explains, “Above all, it depends on whether one is capable of doing service to people without first asking for something in return.” How many virgins used to sink into the grave because they sacrificed themselves in a heroic spirit. At least a piece of earthly life many virgin souls laid on the altar of Christ. This great nobility is so well known that virgin souls are called when contagious diseases threaten life or when the excessive demands of a post are too much for life. The virginity has the need to perform the greatest and hardest, even heroically giving life.

How many virgins are from spiritual children

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5. female needs in the virgin sphere of life

They are surrounded by children to whom they have given, or at least increased and strengthened, the higher life of the soul through education and apostolate, charity and community leadership. The foundations and works which the virgins have brought into being are also compared to such spiritual children. From such foundations go out constantly and manifold benefits, even if the virgins can no longer work personally. Many virgins have continued to work for a long time after their death, through the people who inspired and encouraged them, and through the works that brought them to life. The most beautiful testament, however, is the virgin's exemplary nature, with which she continues to shine after her death through many future generations and continues to inspire good. Can virginity, then, not fully satisfy the womanly need for children in a supernatural way? Women, it is said, were eager to set up a monument for the future. How many monuments we have in education and charity and in the apostolate, which constantly carry on the fame of virgin souls!

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THE VIRGIN'S STRUGGLE FOR HER LIVELIHOOD

1. mutual relations between profession and virginity

Misses who do not have a gainful occupation often wait for a marriage to provide them well. Those who want to support themselves are generally more cautious about courting. Providing for oneself through an economic occupation can favor and facilitate the decision to become a virgin. If a single woman has grown fond of her profession, it is not always easy for her to give up her economic profession when she marries. According to Christian social principles, married

women should devote themselves to the household, the family and the upbringing of children. It would therefore be possible for a young lady to be led by her love of her profession to remain single. However, an idealistic occupation rather than a purely gainful occupation would be tempting: social occupations, educational occupations, cultural occupations. In this respect, the high professional conception could be conducive to the virginal ideal. One is completely absorbed or fully occupied by one's profession. There are professions that are not compatible with family life. Of course, virginity presupposes that not the profession but the "kingdom of heaven" forms the actual motive.

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1. the relations between profession and virginity

One can be induced to virginity not only by a profession, but also by virginity to a profession. Those who do not think of marriage must provide for themselves. In former times one found rich single ladies who were not dependent on a profession. But if they did not do serious work of a professional nature, they often ran the risk of becoming too personally idiosyncratic or original. The virginal ideal, if they grasped it fully, has of course protected many of them from deformities and rigidities. Today, virgin souls are to be found in large numbers among store employees and workers, among educators and social workers. What usually keeps them in the social position is not the economic profession, however ideal it may be, but virginity itself. One observer of these conditions states the following: "If the ideal of virginity were not the primary thing, even the teacher, the nurse, and the social worker will leave the profession without further ado as soon as the right comes along." Thus, virginity strengthens many to persevere and persevere in

the profession. Their lifelong devotion in the profession is a merit of virginity.

The virgin souls would be called to support the abstinence or celibacy of the man with their economic activity. Who should support an unmarried man or

provide the household for a widower? A lady who has a firm and certain virginal attitude is best suited for this. She can then share in the benefits of the home she prepares for others. In monasteries we have ministries which are to be provided by single virgins. Such maids have the advantage that their virginal ideals are strengthened by the virginal spirit of the convent. For the household in spiritual houses one also desires virgin souls. The Church demands that a virgin spirit reign there. The nobler and more capable the souls are who decide on such vocations, the better the clergy is served. Here we can see clearly how apostolic and catalytic flowers sprout from the soil of the economic profession as soon as it is cultivated by ideal virgin souls. More often, virginity must also come to the aid of families and support their tasks: Through virgin daughters of their own, through virgin servants, through the help of virgin souls, through virgin caregivers. How happy parents often are that a daughter decides to be a virgin and stays at home. A virgin who is happy that she was allowed to care for her parents writes to us: “I was allowed to close the eyes of both parents, the father and the mother. But I also feel it, how their blessing continues to work in my life.” Sometimes

a virgin, after the parents had died, still sacrificed herself for the younger siblings. These are all proofs of how virginity is not a hindrance to family life, but a support and a supplement. If there is no daughter who can or wants to take over this help, one has to call in unmarried servants. Among these servants, the virgin souls stand out because they are the most faithful and sacrificial maids. Some virgin servants have actually grown into a house or a family for this reason.

2. the economic self-sufficiency of the young woman

The virgin should take care that she does not become a burden to others later. These and those virgins are oedalistic and trusting and then think that they can get away with some charitable and social work. These occupations are often organized professionally. In this field, people love to take much and give little. If one wanted to base one's economic existence on this, one could be sorely disappointed. With a womanly gimmick one can provide today nobody economically. From the beginning, the virgin should choose a profession in which she can stay later. As is known, there are positions for which young girls who are beautiful and agile are desired. The older virgins are pushed away from such positions.

jobs away. The virgin must have a profession that also offers guarantees for the later decades. Therefore, it is also required that it be economically secure. If the virgin must not only provide for herself, but also support others, the profession should yield the appropriate reward.

If a virgin wants to stay at home with parents or siblings, she should learn the household as a profession. It would be

useful to try out this knowledge a little in a foreign country. This should be done early. One is at these times at home for some time still dispensable and even in young years still more teachable. If the parents have died, the virgin may have to head a foreign household. Then she is glad if she has a domestic occupation which is properly learned and practiced. The virgin should not be deterred from this by the fact that her brothers and sisters promise to take her into their own family one day. Circumstances and attitudes may change or someone may interfere unpleasantly in the family relations. The professional knowledge can be put to good use in the paternal or sibling household or in other people's places of work and is therefore always welcome. In this way one preserves independence and gains respect. This also benefits the virginal way of life.

The more capable a virgin is in her profession, the better she can serve people. Much is

2. the economic self-sufficiency of the virgin

They were also interested in achieving their special purposes through professional knowledge: Saving time for religious exercises, special qualification for charitable and social work, exploitation of professional relationships for self-education and for the apostolate. A virgin remarks: "Since I do my professional work promptly, I was able to spare time to satisfy my innermost longing by increasing religious exercises." "The profession itself became a great source of joy for me, as I was able to utilize the skills for the practice of charity." "Also, the profession brought me together with many people and I gained insight into many a life destiny. I could not only advise and assist them. I also thanked God

each time that He had been especially good to me. I became happier and happier.”

If the virgin were to be surrounded by too many worries through her profession, the virginal ideals could suffer. The apostle Paul, who wants to relieve the virgins of family worries, certainly does not want to bind them to the world through professional worries. This danger is to be overcome by the fact that the virgin cultivates a high professional attitude and always awakens pure professional intentions. Virginity will restrain the Virgo from becoming too much anchored to the world through the profession. If the profession is taken up into the virginal light and freedom, it is in the

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The new concept is not an obstacle to spiritual striving, but rather an impetus, stimulus, and encouragement.

3. career crises and career changes

“The married man wants to achieve something in his profession for a double reason: out of a great professional goal and out of love for his family. The single woman, on the other hand, who has no family to take care of, works only for her own support. Therefore, it would be important that the profession offer her a lot.” The virgins themselves draw attention to a second difficulty: “In the case of the married woman, the splendor which the husband or perhaps already the growing children possess falls to a substantial part on her. The single woman, however, is worth no more and no less than she knows how to make of herself.” The social position which the virgin wishes to conquer will therefore not be reached by the way of marriage and family, but by the way of profession. If she desires social honor and recognition on earth, she must seek it mostly in the profession. The profession therefore has a special meaning for the virgin. If she places her hopes too largely on professional development, she may, however, be disappointed on occasion in the older days. Only the virgin who relies on the virginal ideals cannot be thrown off the safe track.

3. career crises and career changes

The virgins often complain that they are overburdened in their professions. Through a healthy lifestyle and psychological work methods, they should learn to manage their strength well. If the working conditions need to be changed, they should contact the social labor protection in order to receive help. Here and there, however, it is not the actual overwork but the monotonous way of working from which they suffer mentally and physically. One virgin says: “The saddest thing, in my opinion, is the personal dullness. Such workers run mechanically into the days without hope that things will be different again.” Virgins must be spiritually and religiously striving in addition to work in order to keep the soul fresh and alive. Are not virginal ideals an invaluable comfort in such difficulties? More often, however, it is not the profession but one’s own weakness that is to blame for virgins feeling pressed. “The worst off are probably those who, in spite of their sickliness, drag themselves to work every day, who may have to miss work more often. If possible, they resist in order not to be a burden to anyone. “In such cases, not only medical help, but also social assistance is necessary from time to time. But that the virgin remains mentally upright and strong in all complaints, the spiritual religious ideals must take care of that. Of course, one can become ill not only in the factory, which is often unfairly scolded, but also in the workplace.

but also at home in the family. It is reported of such virgins: “In many cases, when the parents die away and the younger siblings become independent, she is already severely run down. Health gradually begins to go on strike, and finally the Virgo feels that her strength is simply spent.” If the Virgo gets into social distress as a result, social institutions must bring her help. As an ideal Virgo, she knows how to bear suffering and sorrow courageously.

A professional crisis in Virgo does not always have external causes. In the best of professional circumstances, some Virgins may become completely miserable in the years between thirty and forty. Probably, such virgins have not chosen their work as a life profession. In their girlhood, most of them hope that they will be taken out of their professional troubles at the right time. That is why they do not settle down deeper into their profession. If the virgin as a girl did not have the right professional empathy, she must try to create this mood even later. It will then become more a religious than a social problem. It would be socially dangerous to give up a secure existence and to embark on a career that is economically insecure on ideal ground. The virgin should be careful not to become economically dilapidated and to “wade” into social unhappiness. The philosophizing about the ideals is very easy, so

4. vocational training and professional protection

long as one is protected by an economically secure background.

A virgin, who is well trained, has various possibilities: The activity in a learned trade, employment in a store or in a company or work in a factory, service in a household or social-caritative activity. If the virgin is capable in different branches of work, a change of profession or occupation is possible under certain circumstances, provided it is carried out at the right time. However, one should first seek the advice of experienced and conscientious people. It may also happen that several types of work are combined. But whoever jumps economically from one place to another loses reputation and also loses efficiency. There is nothing safe about only helping out in all areas, and this cannot be satisfactory in the long run. Every profession has something hard, not only for the virgin, but also for others, and this boredom and dryness must simply be overcome by a higher spirit.

4. vocational training and professional protection

Especially in the countryside outside, wit still discover virgins who let themselves be introduced to a profession by a person who is also not exactly proficient, without completing a regular apprenticeship. Those who have not passed the professional examinations, in the occupation of

do not attain prestige. Sometimes parents also lack the understanding and foresight to let the girls be educated properly. In one letter we read: “I was not prevented from learning a trade by my parents, although my worn-out mother could have used some help. We emphasize once again that the household should also be considered a profession. Therefore, it should be learned professionally. In order to accustom the virgins a little to those times when they no longer have a family, we recommend an early stay in a foreign country. “Care should be taken that a daughter would look around a bit in a foreign country before she has to devote herself completely to the task at home. There are so many opportunities of training for female youth today, which would after all prepare fundamentally for a later time.” Vocational training should be so generous that the virgin also gets some insight into the spiritual and social structure of the profession. This facilitates the attitude toward the profession and increases the enjoyment of the profession.

The Virgo can expect advancement in the profession only if she is quite capable and also knows the innovations that improve and expand the profession. The more active Virgos are keenly interested in professional training. “Every profession threatens to become unbearable once it no longer offers anything worth striving for.” “The Virgo should have the will to learn something new. ” “In

4. vocational training and professional protection

I attended courses all the time during my youth. Now I feel confident and proficient in my job. This makes me very happy.” “Connected with the flowing life, one is still in development. You continue to build on the knowledge and skills you gained earlier and keep setting new goals. Thus one remains professionally adaptable and changeable. You have the opportunity to pass on what’s new.” Whoever masters the profession technically and socially gains greater prestige among people, which can also be used for the apostolate.

In most areas you cannot create favorable working conditions unless you proceed together and therefore organize yourselves professionally. For the virgin there are still a number of postulates which are not completely fulfilled: Fair wages, family wages for those in need of support, protection of women in business, prevention of overwork, care for the sick and weak, religious freedom, old age care, legal protection, *etc.* It would be embarrassing if the Virgins were to sit in professional organizations which are not Christian or which fight against the Church. With the professional associations, the virgin must support the Christian social and economic order. Therefore, it cannot be justified to simply stay away and leave the fight to others. On this problem, a Virgin writes

woman: “Single people, who are socially dependent in their jobs, often don’t fight back in the workplace in the way they should. They complain, but they do not fight. They do not know the right and appropriate means. They are afraid that they might lose the favor of their superiors. They are afraid they might be thrown out on the street. In many cases, women do not show solidarity at all. You can feel that especially in the organizations.” Another virgin says, “Because virgins are so modest, don’t really emphasize their abilities, knowledge and skills, people often overlook them.” This very moment has awakened the social sense of some Virgins. Today we have many virgin souls who are leaders in professional organizations. Without a doubt, this is an important apostolate. In several letters, the virgins complain that they are not given the legal protection they deserve. “If a married woman is wronged, she must expect her husband or her sons to defend her. A single woman can rather be left in the lurch or even pushed back once. There is often no one to take a stand in her favor.” “The virgin sometimes stands almost as if without rights in the world. There we must become more Staufacherinnen again. The certainty that one day the crown will beckon to the right should spur us on to stand up for our rights,

where we are always placed. It is not in the woman’s nature to justify or defend herself in advocate phrases. Is there not an occasional lack of trust in the great leader, in the Holy Spirit?” Another adds, “Perhaps one is quite innocently in trouble, and just then one has no one who is really serious about a virgin. In such cases, one should have a reputable lawyer who is not afraid of the power of men. Fortunately, in our city we have a protectorate for single women. Those who

need advice and assistance receive it free of charge. Efficient lawyers will even take over a possible lawsuit free of charge. The denomination is not even asked. People are simply helped, and I liked that. Something like that should exist in every city.”

J. The social additions and facilitations of the profession

Because the modern way of working and today’s pace of work can attack health badly, Virgo must have a proper rest. She should find relaxation in her free time: For the nerves, for the spirit, for the mind! Virgins sometimes think that they can relax while doing domestic work. Certainly the change of work brings some relief. But for completely tired people, complete rest is necessary. The virgin herself confesses that now and then she is tired by

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too great a break in sleep is detrimental to oneself: “If one sleeps too little, one likes to become nervous in one’s posture. Then the others have to suffer from it. “The vacations granted by business should really be used for physical and mental refreshment. Even if a virgin in the countryside believes that a vacation is not really necessary, it would be beneficial for her to come to a different environment, to a different milieu.

The virgin should be oriented about which social institutions can be claimed for professional relief, recreation and vacations. However, the special circumstances peculiar to the virgin way of life must be taken into account. Since the profession often does not satisfy the whole person, a supplement must be sought: Through courses and reading, through religious exercises and association events, through feminine work, charity or apostolate, *etc.* Virgin souls will not have to be told that they must not “secularize”. In any case, not only the leisure activities must be chosen according to this, but the virgin should be able to stay in a sphere which does not hold down or depress the soul, but uplifts and stimulates it.

Here and there one hears that conflicts arise between young girls and older young women, be it at work, be it in the apostolate, be it in

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5. social additions and facilitations of the profession

the clubs. For bridging these contrasts, a virgin writes us a nice rule: “In the younger years I liked to work with slightly older daughters to learn something ‘proficient’ from them, and now I love the younger vintages to be able to learn the innovations from them. I think old and young should be able to put up with each other if you can adapt.” The ratios can shift somewhat due to the mood of the times. In the past, the older people had the upper hand in the organization; today, the young want to come into their own again. Arguably, one has enough tasks for both. The younger ones like to leave some work to the older ones, for other actions the younger ones are better suited. Even if certain inhibitions must be overcome here or there, one should insist on a certain cooperation.

Of course, it is important that the virgin has a home where she feels comfortable. Some would prefer to be with their siblings or with close relatives if their parents have died. A Virgo says about this: “Where there is great sibling love, one builds on mutual help. Love sacrifices itself. Such sibling love actually still exists.” Another describes how a virgin can be pushed out of the family: “All of a sudden she is actually on the street. The strangeness seems hard when you never got used to it when you were young.” It’s felt especially hard when the virgin has long helped

has to build up the family. A virgin who has been peeled off, however, still finds her way: “As the eldest of nine children, I helped my five brothers to an apprenticeship through my profession. When my help was no longer needed, I went abroad and I was happy there to be able to practice my profession, which I had learned in youth.” A virgin gives the

following advice for the solution of this problem: “One should be close to one’s brothers and sisters when one needs one. It is wise to stay away otherwise. This reduces the danger of discord among relatives.”

“Many virgins worry about the time when they can no longer earn. This is especially hard on the sickly. Such should be helped in the first place.” The state old-age insurance, which we now have in Switzerland, cannot suffice in all cases. First, it offers too little for full maintenance. Secondly, it starts too late. For many virgins are unable to work before they reach the age of 65. It is therefore necessary for the virgins to provide for themselves by thrift or by private insurance at the proper time. Certainly it is right to have so much confidence in God that one does not approach the old days too anxiously. But a pious virgin realizes that one must not neglect the natural means: “As well as it is financially possible, I have already thought of the later years. “

XVII.

THE NEED FOR A HOME SPHERE

I. The intimate union with the family of the heavenly bridegroom

The virgins who helped father and mother or the siblings at home are often in the family the longest, longer than the siblings who have separated through marriage. Because they have made so many sacrifices to preserve the family, they also feel more connected to the family than the others. But because of this, they must not think that they must be able to be in the family of a sister or brother as a full member in any case later. The family of the brothers and sisters form again something new and something closed. In

this sense, the Virgin writes: “The virgin sister must be aware that she is outside the family circle of her relatives, who are building a family of their own. This awareness of no longer being at home in a family can occasionally cause the single person deep pain in the soul. For the family is the most natural circle in which one may move freely.”

He who marries separates himself from the parental family, and fo/g# to the man. The bride “shall leave father and mother” and “cleave” to the bridegroom (Gen z, 24). May the love

of the virgin to her heavenly bridegroom be less? It is nothing extraordinary if Christ as the bridegroom also demands the allegiance. Therefore, the virgins should not talk too much about the feeling of home. Here lies the touchstone of the bride’s love. Christ says to the virgins: “Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me” (Mt 10:37). For their sacrifice of the home, they are amply compensated. For every virgin “who leaves house and field, brother and sister, father and mother, for my name’s sake, will receive a hundredfold in return” (Mt 19:28). A virgin who is not capable of this separation cannot even be a disciple, let alone a bride of Jesus Christ (Lk 14:26).

But does not the Scripture say: “It is not good for a man to be alone” (Gen 2:18)? Are virgins really alone? Would a man be content with his wife who constantly laments that she has no home? Can a bride of Christ lament to her heavenly bridegroom? The wise virgins, according to the Gospel, live with their bridegroom in a locked apartment. Christ is with the virgin, be it at home in her room, be it in the church, be

it in the professional place. It is up to the bride to prepare a beautiful apartment for her bridegroom. The soul of the bride is the temple in which Christ wants to take residence. Supernaturally and mystically considered,

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ı. Connection to the Heavenly Bridegroom’s Family

the bride and the bridegroom live and dwell together. Shouldn’t this fact of Christ’s bridehood, when experienced inwardly, awaken a sense of home? So the feeling of being alone must not arise in the virgin at all.

But is it not natural to desire a family community on earth? The married woman prepares a new home and the religious woman shares in a monastic community. Is not the bride of Christ to be given the benefit of a family community, of some kind of father’s house? When Christ came to the temple at ı2 years of age, He felt the homeliness of the Father’s house, and therefore He almost could not separate Himself. Even to his parents, who did not understand his sense of home in the temple, he said, “Did you not know that I must be in that which is my Father’s?” (Lk 2:49). It is into the Father’s house of Christ that the bride is solemnly introduced when she is raised to be the bride of Christ. To the Bride of Christ, the heavenly Father will reveal His benevolence in a special way. Mary, the Mother of Jesus, undoubtedly takes care of the Bride of Christ in a motherly way. Does not the Virgin have to feel familiar and homely in the company of her Father, Mother and Bridegroom? To the family of the heavenly bridegroom the virgin should seek to attach herself intimately. There she really finds a beautiful home, where everything is familiar to her soul.

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The girls often speculate on luck, through a good match they suddenly reach prestigious positions and are surrounded by the social honor of the new family or relatives. Perhaps the woman is also addressed with titles of honor, which the man possesses. If she is not spiritually noble, she now looks down on the virgin companions, on those friends who were actually much more intelligent and pious than she. Should the single ones now be angry about this and consider their fate as unfortunate? The cases are probably rare in which the single virgin acquired a special social standing by offices and tasks, by professional advancement or organizational activity. Can fame and position in the world grant a person full happiness? The Virgin, after all, renounced earthly transience and vanity in order to become greater in the “kingdom of heaven,” in the kingdom of grace. The name of a bride of Christ is the greatest title of honor before heaven, and the bridehood of Christ is religiously the greatest “position”. The dignity does not depend at all on whether the world sees, correctly estimates and honors it. The final judgment will one day determine that the virgins are “more fortunate” than others.

It is possible for a woman to become greater and greater in the community into which she has entered.

is growing. She takes an active part in the advancement of the husband and in the education and development of the children. The family develops under circumstances to a certain spiritual center. A virgin companion is not merely

deprived of these family stimuli and advantages, but has been kept at a lower community level by her simple labor. The comparison will naturally show a gulf if one contrasts a woman of earthly fortune and a virgin in poor circumstances. Let us look a little further in society. We also find women who, through marriage and family, have not risen socially, but have become rotten and impoverished. Many virgins go through life more easily alone than those comrades who still have to drag along a husband and children under unfortunate circumstances. Today a Virgo has many opportunities open to her which can further her personal development. The virgin can usually devote more time and energy to this than a mother, who has to be absorbed in the ordinary household chores. A virgin remarks: “How many spiritual teachings I was allowed to listen to and participate in, which have given me a fine spiritual equipment.”

Some virgins complain that they have no protector. Married women are less likely to be ruthless, because they fear that they may be attacked by the

husband and defended by the children. They are much more intolerant of single virgins. For this reason, they are treated worse here and there, even in the stores. Some are so shy that they do not like to run to a secretary for help. With the social progress of the present time, however, such cases are becoming rarer. Incidentally, Christ promises those who are unjustly persecuted not only a special blessing, but also peace of mind. But what the unmarried women still miss in particular is guidance. If they were properly counseled from the beginning, advancement or at least a happier career would be more likely. Such advice could be had today from

social institutions. But did the virgins take care of it at the right time? In the letters of a virgin it says: “We are also aware of the own guilt of many women and therefore we do not want to pass judgment on others.” Today, many paths are open to virgins if they want to bravely defend themselves.

Being alone is felt by Virgo especially when she is in distress: In unemployment and illness, in old age and accidents, *etc.* As soon as one is in misfortune, even girlfriends can withdraw and hide. Being alone can also be hard when one gets distressed and in trouble. Perhaps one has no trusted people nearby who are willing to share such worries or little

The only way to do this is to take part in it and to uplift the desolate soul. In such circumstances, by the way, families have also failed here and there, or they have led to certain community crises. One should not always blame virginity when such difficulties arise. History shows that virginity is rather a power to alleviate social evils, if it can act freely.

Another difficulty is mentioned: “It is difficult to be always among strangers all day, from morning to night: already at breakfast, at work, at lunch, maybe even in the room. The opposite can also cause worries. You are too familiar and you tell all the secrets or interfere in all private matters. It is an art of its own to behave wisely in all circumstances, not to let anything dangerous get to you and to radiate peace of mind to your fellow men. The woman can use the ability to intuitively grasp the various circumstances. The virgin, who should be familiar with the rules of life of the celestial

wisdom, will not know how to remedy the community deficiencies the worst.

3. being alone as a need and an advantage

Not all virgins find it difficult to be alone. Such and such characters

even have an innate longing for solitude. Certainly, here and there it is the shy natures or people who love the activity less. Of course, they must not alienate themselves from people and in seclusion they must not go to rack and ruin. It would also be harmful to brood unnecessarily or to cultivate quirks in silence. For a contemplative soul, solitude can become very fruitful. Only the world considers being alone as “desert”. The heavenly Bridegroom revealed Himself to His bride precisely in the desert, and there faith and love had to prove faithful and genuine (Jer 2:2). So the bride could not be called “forsaken” here (Is 62:4). The virgin, who likes to be alone, recognizes the nearness of the bridegroom and hears his secrets.

Many are lamenting at present that their hearts are almost suffocating in the outer business. They are swept along in the current of life without coming to their senses. The restlessness and haste become a torment and agony for them. One plea is always on their lips: O could we be alone for once! With wisdom they say: “I looked around where I would find a resting place” (Sir 24:11). If they can risk it, they take flight from the world, at least for some time. The Bridegroom has helped them to do so: “I will take you and bring you to Sion” (Jer 3:14). The Virgin thanks him for this: “He who created me let me rest in my tent” (Sir 24:12).

3. being alone as a need and an advantage

Married women occasionally say it quietly: If only we could be alone here and there! It is not easy to be constantly tied to other people. Mental needs make themselves felt for which other people have no understanding. These are not peculiarities. Perhaps it is the deepest religious dispositions which desire solitary intimacy with God. Should not the virgins be grateful that they have been spared these difficulties? “In the holy city they were given a place of rest,” and “in the holy habitation they could minister” before the heavenly Bridegroom (Sir 24:14, 15). The place is so homely “where the voice of the Bridegroom may be heard” (Jer 33:11). There is not sadness, but joy.

The bride asks more than once in the Song of Songs to lead her into solitude. All the pleasures in the outside world cannot satisfy her. She wants to spend time with the bridegroom without being constantly overheard by people. Being alone with the heavenly Bridegroom is the longing of the Bride of Christ. The “closed garden” is the Kingdom of Heaven in which she is at home. Thus a virgin reports: “I have never felt oppressive feelings of loneliness. On the contrary, solitude has always become to me a blissful togetherness.”

The virgins are warned against seeking the earthly in an undue manner. They

should not be rooted in the earthly and therefore not feel too at home in the world. They should be peeled off and

detached and free. They should not seek attachment to people. The homesickness that seizes them in their hearts goes to something higher, to something eternal and heavenly. Because they are waiting for Christ, they have withdrawn. For they must be ready for his coming. Of course, the Bridegroom will not appear visibly. He visits the brides by grace, by illuminations and intercessions. This can be repeated many times. For Christ has said, “I go and I come again” (John 14:28). If she feels dry or stimulated, always the bride has a certainty: “The Lord is near” (Phil 4, 5). Often she has to await the visit of grace of the Bridegroom. Then the virgin wishes to be undisturbed and alone. One can say to the virgins: “The kingdom of God is within you” (Lk 17, 21). Isn’t that supposed to be a homeland feeling, more glorious than any homeland feeling on earth!

4. the home facility and the familiar environment

How the home should look like, the virgins may just say themselves: “The home must be for the virgin what the apartment is for the married woman, what the cell is for the cloister woman. Therefore, there should be a certain amount of intimacy and security.” “It should be more comfortable to sit at home than to

4. home facility and familiar environment

in the public place.” If the virgin cannot arrange her own apartment, she should at least have her own room. If one has to share the room with another person, one cannot arrange oneself in a domestic, personal and homely way. The home must be arranged not according to the rules of the world, but according to the virginal spirit. For the virginal dwelling, therefore, the word of the Holy Scripture fits: “By wisdom a house is built, and by prudence it is firmly established” (Prov. 24:3). The virgin’s room should be like a bridal chamber, so that the furnishings are pleasing to the heavenly Bridegroom. The one virgins desire, if possible, their own household: “I am of the opinion that it is still more beautiful to dine at one’s own table with simple food than to go to a restaurant. Admittedly, this takes a lot of time if the food is to be prepared carefully and with variety. To avoid rushing, lunch should be prepared in the morning. It would be better if the cooking could be done by another person, so that everything is prepared by the time one gets home. Domestic life would be more practical and cheaper if two like-minded virgins could housekeep together. In advance, everything would have to be well discussed and financially arranged.” Others prefer to lodge in a home or take meals to get rid of domestic worries. The professional work otherwise burdens

enough. However, one should be able to demand those dishes which correspond to one's personal needs. Of course, one also has various wishes for the rooms, so that the personal taste comes to the right. In homes that have a chapel, the virgins can live under the same roof with the heavenly bridegroom. The ideal of the third would be a kind of "modern apartment house" where one could dine in a hall with others or alone in one's own room. Here it would also be permitted to bring visitors for meals. Pleasant rooms would be available for recreation, study, meetings and gatherings.

In the profession, the virgin usually does not find many people with whom she could maintain an intimate relationship. The people she takes care of in the charity or in the organization usually have their own family duties. Apart from a few hours or a few works, the friends are also bound or promised. The virgin is well liked when she does good on all sides. In the end, however, she is the single one who has to take care of herself physically and spiritually. Thus the old complaint is repeated: "It is certainly difficult to be alone, to have no you around. There is only one means which saves the virgin: The wondrous togetherness with the spiritual world." Through the books the way is paved, with distant spirit-men

4. home facility and familiar environment

to maintain soul-to-soul relationships. If these relations from spirit to spirit are formed on an artistic level, the personality is grasped even more deeply. But it is even more beautiful and fruitful to enter into contact with the great people of the hereafter in the communion of saints. The Church also teaches how close the angels are to us and how great their help would be if we had an inclined ear for their interjections. The virgins thus live in an invisible spiritual milieu that seems very familiar.

The Bride of Christ must become familiar with the whole creation if she is to be spiritually and religiously alert. Everywhere in nature, which is created by the Word of God, we see the traces of the eternal Word of God. Everything reminds us of the wisdom, power and goodness of the heavenly Bridegroom. This is revealed even more subtly and magnificently in human beings, especially in the mystical body of Christ, in the Church. There we are not “strangers” but “members of the household” and therefore we must feel at home (Eph 2:10). This is especially true for virgins, who are to be an image of the Church. The virgin then joins the Church quite intimately and takes an intimate part in the expressions of the Church. In the ecclesiastical year, the life of Christ, her Bridegroom, is mystically represented and renewed. Is the church year not to become a mysterious experience for the bride of Christ? To transfer the mood of the church year itself to one’s own home

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XVII The Need for a Home Sphere

Some virgins seek to represent the most important mysteries in rhythmic order through some images. Already the bride in the Song of Songs loved to turn everything in the whole environment into symbols in order to be constantly reminded of the bridegroom. With such means it is possible to make the surroundings far and wide familiar and homely, bridal and familiar. Love instills dy namic movement and variety:

the heart must be grabbed, lifted and carried away.

Xvm.

THE UNIFICATION OF VIRGIN SOULS IN ONE COMMUNITY

1. the inner need for a community

Seen from the outside, virgin souls today resemble a scattered herd, a4driven one to another. One is there and the other is there, often not far apart, socially and emotionally but still strangers to each other. Here one complains about abandonment and there the other one moans about loneliness and yet they do not come together to form a community. The well-known individualism of the modern age has probably also wreaked certain havoc here. The decision to become a virgin is certainly a very personal and voluntary matter. But the bridehood of Christ is not as exclusive as the union among spouses. Not merely a single virgin, but many virgins gather around Christ as brides. In the supernatural realm, it is possible for all to have the same heavenly Bridegroom. The spousal communion with Christ

immediately establishes also a certain spousal communion among the virgins. Thus, virginity by its very nature leads to a certain communion.

The virgin souls renounce their own familial community and they want to

also not enter into cine monastic community. Even the members do not share the ideals of the virgin soul. The profession does not intervene so deeply in the life of the soul that it would lead to an actual personal communion. Are virgins, then, to be deprived of the benefits of ciner intimate psychic communion? Common ideals have always united people in communities. The virgin souls have not become because they have not cultivated the virgin ideals enough. These ideals need to regain more attraction and penetration. If these ideals are really the most beautiful and highest for the virgin, they must not be put in the background. If the bridal love moves the heart in the deepest way, one cannot be silent about it among other Virgos. The same ideals and the same love urge people to form a community. It should be a community that can replace the family and monastic community.

When virginity was in its historical prime, virgin souls formed their own status in the Church. They were bound together not only by spousal ideals and spousal love, but also by ecclesiastical rights and duties, even privileges. In the ecclesiastical community they fulfilled a function, a task, and it was recognized that this function was something important. It was a closed

I. The inner need for a community

The community was a closed one, in which one was not allowed to come and go as one pleased. Through the consecration of virgins, the Misses were incorporated after a long examination. Those who did not observe the rules of community life carefully were brought back to the community spirit by admonitions and punishments. Such a tight community would not have been possible if precious community values were not hidden in virginity itself. It is a harm to society that these community virtues, which would result from the virginal ideal, are not better cultivated today.

In the Holy Scriptures, the virgin souls mostly appear as a community. In heaven above, John sees a closed group of virgin souls who follow the Lamb. The group of virgins, which still stays on earth, is a parallel to the heavenly community circle. The king and queen are accompanied not only by single virgins, but by whole rows of virgins. In the Gospel, at least five wise virgins gather around Christ and celebrate the wedding feast with their bridegroom in closed company. It is not a coincidence that the virgin souls always form a community. The force that pushes everywhere to a community rests in the nature of the virginal ideals.

The Bride of God is often a community in its essence. In the Old Covenant the people were

Israel and in the New Covenant the Church a Bride of God. John introduces us to the bride of Christ as a city community. It is clear that the community spirit is the life of the bride. Could the virgins, as brides of Christ, be a full reflection of the Church if they lacked the community spirit? The need for

communality is undoubtedly in the nature of the supernatural bridehood. Of course, this communality should not be exaggerated either. We do not want to pay homage to collectivism. The personal, must not be diminished, but it should come to full development. In order to achieve this goal, however, some virgins long for a better cultivation of community.

2. the spousal sisterly love among the young spousal souls

Christ exhorts his brides: “As I have loved you, so you also should love one another” (Jn 13:34). The heavenly Bridegroom often calls His bride “sister” in the Song of Songs to remind her also of sisterly love. This sisterly love is not an ordinary love, but it must be a spousal love. The relationship between the virgin souls should not be merely familial, but even mystical. Among the brides of Christ that love must become effective which they have received from Christ. In the words of the virgin Paul this is a

2. sisterly love among virgin souls

concluded: “You have learned from God to love one another” (1 Thess 4:9). “Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, as saints and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, longsuffering. Bear with one another and forgive if one finds fault with another…. But above all things have love” (Col 3:12). “Be devoted to one another with sisterly (brotherly) love, and come to meet one another in respect” (Rom 12:9). Extraordinary sisterly love will be the hallmark of Christ’s brides (Jn 13:34). With the virgin John, these virgin souls will be able to say: “We have known the love of Christ. He laid down his life for us. So we too should lay down our lives for our sisters (brothers)” (1 John 3:16). How wonderful a community of virgin souls would be if this spousal spirit of sacrifice dominated everything!

It is generally desired that among the virgin souls more solidarity, better community spirit should come to life: One for all and all for one! The virgin souls must feel more intimately united, and therefore they should explicitly cultivate the feeling of belonging together. In the mystical body of Christ they are not only members, but brides of Christ (Eph 4:25). It is natural that they bear with one another. One may expect more from the brides of Christ. They should “strive to maintain the unity of the Spirit,” to share with one another the spousal ideals and the bridal

to practice love in life (Eph 4:2). These spousal members in the mystical body of Christ must “care for one another in solidarity.” “If one member suffers something, all the members suffer with it. If one member receives a distinction, all the members rejoice with it” (r Cor 12:26). How many helps, how many attentions could be given to one another if love were great enough! Shall not the spousal love be distinguished! Surely it must be possible to say of a spousal community that all are of one heart and one soul!

The virgins work in society in two directions: through the apostolate and through charity! From their Spouse they have learned both, the zeal of the soul and charity. This spousal charity would not be genuine if it neglected the very nearest, the virgin sisters. If the virgin has abundantly poured the oil of love into the wounds of others, she may be expected to be no less charitable in her own virginal family, in the community of virginal souls. The virgins must be vigilant that they do not run out of oil in their own virginal circle. According to the evangelist, the brides of Christ, who sit familiarly around the table of the Bridegroom, are like young “shoots of the olive tree” (Ps 127:3). Already in the Old Covenant, the brides of Christ were compared to a useful fruitful olive tree (Jer.

2. sisterly love among virgin souls

11,16). The olive branch is a symbol of peace, peacefulness, sisterhood, unanimity. The joyful togetherness was to be indicated when in the Old Covenant the guests were anointed with oil at a meal. “As sweet as anointing oil is it when sisters (brothers) live together in concord” and work together (Ps 132:1). What is expected of ordinary Christians is to be experienced more deeply in the spousal communion of virgin souls. The community of virgin souls is manifold, not only a community of ideals and love, but also a community of prayer and works, a community of sacrifices and merits. With Paul, the virgin souls should be able to report to one another: Because of communion with you we remember you as often as we offer up prayers (Phil 1:4). If a virgin were overlooked in a common work, she would have to defend herself on her own initiative, that she could contribute to it after all, as the Christians of Paul’s time did (2 Cor 8:4). It should be a need for the virgins to perform the good works together, if possible, in order to receive communal merits as well. Often in the Church, sisterhoods have been formed, communities have been formed, in order to exchange the merits mutually. What a beautiful thing will sprout when hundreds and hundreds of virgin souls come together in this way.

create! The community of virgin souls would thus become “a vineyard on a fruitful hill” planted by the heavenly

Bridegroom (Is 5, r). The more intimate the communion with Christ, the greater the fruitfulness. This is evident from the words of Christ: “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, bears much fruit” (John 15:5). If the vine stands on the virgin hill, it must flourish most beautifully.

3. proposals of young women for a common life

At present, it is not the time of the old, but of the young. These and those aged ladies were therefore pushed away or postponed and that is why they are displeased. Because they did not stick together, each one could be “done” separately. There was no interest in organizing a resistance. Actually, now a new question arises: Should the older virgins gather in a special association to cultivate the common ideals of virginity? Such competition is resisted by those associations which hold the virgins in high esteem as their members. We are of the opinion that virgin souls can be properly cared for within the framework of existing institutions and organizations. Admittedly, some understanding and accommodation is necessary for this.

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3. proposals of virgins to live together.

It offers no difficulty for virgin souls to come together privately on the ground of friendship. The same spirit, as conditioned by the virginal ideals, facilitates friendship. Faithful friends, according to the Scriptures, are those virgins who can keep the secrets and who do not run away in times of distress or crisis (Sir 6:6, 27, 17). “Let there be many who live at peace with thee. But let your confidant be to you only one out of thousands.” “Only a faithful friend is a strong protection. He who finds her has found a treasure”

(Sir 6:11). Friendship, which goes deeper in soul, connects two people quite intimately. In a certain sense it is therefore similar to a bridal relationship. Of course, we are talking only about friendships between people of the same sex. Just there an intimate friendship can replace a human bridal relationship to some extent. The warmer the sun of grace of Christ shines into it, the more beautiful the flower will develop. The greater the spousal love for Christ, which moves both virgin souls, the finer the friendly love, the mutual goodwill will become.

Many organizations today do not object to the formation of sections. It would therefore be well understood if older ladies wanted to form a group in an association. Experience shows, however, that

the virgin souls do not always hold out such circles for the duration. The group would have to have a program that fits into the associations. In return, they could also demand that the association support the work of the circle. Through this mutual cooperation, the association goals could win. A virgin explains: “By forming groups, the wishes of the older virgins could be taken into account to a large extent. These circles would have to fit harmoniously into the community, of course. Whether this succeeds to the general satisfaction depends mostly on wise leadership.”

Virgins who think of practical life want to enable the virgins to have a common household: In twos, in fives, or in tens and twenties. First, the specter of loneliness should be banished. Secondly, they want to reduce the costs of the household. The proposals foresee many possibilities or

vasiations in order to satisfy all needs and to take into account the different tastes. The plans do not exclude the possibility of combining domestic occupations, business jobs and charitable tasks in order to achieve the goal. The idealists already speak of a “semi-monastic community” which would have to accompany the virgins up the steps of perfection at a decently rapid pace. In the case of larger communities, it would also have to be investigated whether

the existing homes could not fulfill the wishes.

We also do not want to conceal the fact that individual virgin souls would be ready for even greater ventures, either for the foundation of their own Ilauses or for the formation of a “kind of order”. Some of them are looking for a new job that would satisfy them better, others are thinking of a domestic place where they would be well taken care of, and the third have in mind a community in which the most beautiful virtues would be practiced. “It would have to be a generous organization,” wrote one virgin, “more concerned with inwardness and love than with external ties. “Financially and socially, these virgins wanted to place the work on a cooperative basis. “Because many single people in the present situation and in view of their age suffer from the lack of a proper home, it should not be so difficult to win the virgins for such an enterprise. The rooms would have to be beautiful and have a homey feel. There one could hold instructive and entertaining occasions, even large courses. Such a home should become a real center of the lay apostolate. The healthy religious and at the same time progressive and open-minded spirit would cast its rays far out into the lands. “

4. the promotion of the virgin ideals through a movement

Some virgins ascribe the blame for the fact that in Switzerland we have no real virginity movement as in France to the leading personalities: “We became aware again of what we, the single ones, lack because we do not have the leadership for our state that would be possible if one had the right understanding for our ideals. From such complaints we must not conclude that nothing has happened among us. In fact, there is some movement to popularize the virgin ideals: Retreats, special retreats, articles in magazines, distribution of special books, groups in congregations of virgins, *etc.* But why is the movement not making greater progress? Some virgins think that religious and social benefits must be brought to their homes without them doing much. Many do not move, even when they are invited or called to their own courses. These and those circles that were founded for the benefit of the older virgins were quickly disbanded. Some virgins only start to “move” when a joke is made about the “old virgins”. Otherwise they do not react. Because those priests, who would have liked to take care of the problem of virginity, do not respond with a joyful echo, they do not react.

4. the promotion of virgin ideals

or supported by cooperation, some things finally got stuck in the beginnings. So the first postulate would be that the virgins themselves would make some sacrifices for their ideals. In this field, too, it would be true what someone said of the women: “The women are often able to do a lot when it is necessary”. Some energetic virgins, of course, wanted to conquer public opinion just at the beginning. We must not forget that everything must be built up from the bottom up and slowly through small-scale work. “The virgin ideals become a property that can no longer be stolen from the soul only after one has struggled, prayed and worried for them.”

What are the goals of a virginity movement? One virgin says: “On the one hand, the economic and social situation should be improved, and on the other hand, the necessary stimulation for the religious inner life should be offered. Another remarks: “In the circles of the virgins, usually only piety is cultivated. It would be necessary to awaken social helpfulness as well. ” The virgin ideals are not as natural even for pious damsels as it seems to many people. So the virgins must also be religiously introduced to the virginal sphere of mind. With some religious teachings, however, the whole problem is not yet solved. Since many virgins simply endure their social sufferings silently, these difficulties are more often over

or not taken seriously enough. A double bread must be broken for the virgins, the spiritual bread and the social bread, This goal can only be achieved if the virgin souls stand together and help each other. The virgin souls thus form a table community, as it were. The bread is the symbol of unity. Just as the many grains of wheat are baked into one loaf, the many senior virgins must feel together as one community. Virginity is “the unleavened bread of sincerity” that must be earned with many labors (1 Cor 5:8).

Many elderly ladies accept the state of being single only as a fate, without religiously making an ideal out of it. The number of virgin souls who have expressly consecrated themselves as brides of Christ is not so large in our country. It would now be the task of the virgin elite to win over and inspire their “fellow sufferers”, their fellow sisters, for the actual virgin ideals. Virginity is like a light on an elevated place, which illuminates the whole house, the whole virgin city. The virgins are children of light, who are more concerned about the spiritual and the future than about the earthly. With their burning and shining lights, they should also seek out and bring those damsels who have not yet recognized the beauty of the virginal ideals. Through their good example, through their works of

4. the promotion of virgin ideals

The virgin souls should bring about this spiritual transformation and selection of the unmarried sisters by means of light. If they then choose Christ as their bridegroom, they enter a special sphere of light. For “the Lamb is the lamp,” the glory of God, which illuminates the virgin house (Rev. 21:23). Those who “love their fellow sisters in this way abide in the light” (1 Jn z, 10). How beautiful would be the “communion with one another” if all “walked in the light” (1 Jn 1:7), if all were wedded to the eternal light and thereby fashioned into fine light themselves. “Ye are light in the Lord” (Eph 5:8).

One Virgo says, “Those who have a home at home are often so apathetic or simply thoughtless. They seem to have no concept at all of what those who are single must deny themselves.” There again two groups of elderly ladies are juxtaposed, which should come closer to each other in a benevolent and beneficial way. Since they are destined by God to the same fate in life, they should also sail through this life in the same little ship. Certainly, this little ship is tossed to and fro by the storms of the world. But the virgin apostle Paul prays for the virgin souls and gives them his evangelical advice and rules of life. The angel revealed to him that the virgin life pilgrims of the little ship are favored by the fortune of heaven (Acts 27:22).

Not all virgin souls are in the same condition.

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XVII The Unification of the Virgin Souls

The people are blessed with earthly goods in many ways. Some are poor and others are wealthy, some are well placed in their professions and others are pursued by misfortune. Of course, the virgin communities in the world outside cannot be so ideal that one would approach a community of goods. But one should be able to expect a generous readiness to help from a virgin family circle. A needy virgin should be allowed to repeat Ruth's request: "Spread your mantle over me" (Rth 3:9)! In the Song of Songs, "the mantle which the bride of God wears is a symbol of external goods" (HI 5:7). Some virgins could take their fellow sisters under the charitable mantle and do them good in soul and body. Through prayer and through their virtues, those who receive gifts can give back greater things. In this sense, a certain voluntary exchange and compensation of goods took place, which is just befitting for virgins who live under the same veil of virginity, under the same mantle of heavenly ideals (Gen 24:65). Thus, no virgins would have to lament that they were isolated or lonely. The mantle of Christ's spousal love, the mantle that unites kindred spirits, would cover all. Then all sorrow would be dispelled. There would shine that joy which Christ wants to guarantee to the virgin souls as long as they are near the Bridegroom (Mt 9:15).

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XIX.

THE GUIDANCE OF VIRGIN SOULS THROUGH THE ECCLESIASTICAL YEAR

I. Mary as Queen of the Virgins

In the veneration of Mary, the maternal dignity must not be diminished out of one-sidedness. We constantly find the words “Mother of God” or “God-bearer” in the prayers of Marian feasts. But what surrounds this motherhood in an extraordinary way is precisely virginity. The virginity, as it is always said by the ecclesiastical writers, drew down the Son of God, as it were. He wanted to take virgin flesh on earth and sacrifice it for mankind. Between Mary and Christ there certainly existed a maternal relationship, which we cannot imagine finely and sublimely enough, even in human terms. In the liturgy, however, this relationship is occasionally understood in a purely idealistic or mystical way: The relationship of the Virgin Mother to the Word of God or the relationship of the Bride to the heavenly Bridegroom.

Christ is called “the Son of perpetual virginity” in the Preface to the Consecration of the Virgin. According to the Marian prayers of the Christmas season, “the goods of eternal salvation have been given to the human race through the fruitful virginity of Mary. That is why on Marian feasts the Church calls for the first

Reading from: “O holy virginity intact, I do not know with what praise I should praise you”! Should not this sentiment especially pervade the virgin souls? In the splendor of this Marian virginity, every virginity filled with a pious spirit appears great!

Already at the wedding at Cana one notices that Mary steps back a little as mother of Christ, so that she becomes more bride of Christ in the future. Under the Kreize, the Mother of

God offered the virginal humanity of her Son for the redemption. As the second Eve, as the representative of humanity and as the model of the Church, she now becomes the bride of Christ, who in the blood of redemption marries herself to Christ, the heavenly Bridegroom, in a completely new and eternal way. The relationship of Mary and Christ is then liturgically so often represented as a mystical bridal imputation. For the bridehood of Christ, as the virgin soul wants to cultivate it, Mary is therefore the most beautiful and glorious model.

The title image, which is intended to illustrate the consecration of virgins in the Episcopal Book of Blessings, depicts the Immaculate, “the woman clothed with the sun” (Rev ı2, 1), the Immaculate Heart of Mary, pierced with the sword and adorned with virginal flowers. Two angels pay homage to her, one with the scepter for the queen in his hands and the other with the lily of virginity. The six symbols that surround the image point to

1. Mary as the Queen of Virgins

The manna and the flowering staff of Aaron in the urn of the Ark of the Covenant (Hbr 9,4), the altar of smoke in front of the Holy of Holies of the Tent (2 Mos 37,25), the sun over the rice of Jesse or in the monstrance, the gate of heaven or the closed garden. Following the example of Mary, the bridal souls should feel intimately united with the Savior as brides.

The Litany calls Mary the “Queen of Virgins”. In the virgin John, the virgin souls under the cross have been entrusted in a special way to the Blessed Virgin Mary. What is often repeated in the Marian Masses applies first and foremost to the virgin souls: “The virgins, her companions, follow her to

the King as an escort” (Ps 44:15). Mary is the leader of the virgins. As Mary, the sister of Moses, gathered the virgins around her and led them to the Promised Land, so the Mother of God, “the Virgin of virgins,” gathers around her the brides of her divine Son and leads them to the heavenly wedding feast. The virgins form a Marian multitude who have put on the garment of Mary, as is said in a prayer of the Consecration of the Virgin. Shouldn’t the Blessed Virgin Mary, with her virginal strength, be able to do a great deal for her virginal entrusted ones with the Divine Savior?

So the virgin souls must not be

complain that they have no guidance. The heavenly Queen even takes them into her special protection. In the course of the ecclesiastical year, the Most Blessed Virgin Mary appears again and again before the virgins, ar more than ro feasts, to draw the virgins to herself. On the feast of the Immaculate Conception, the Church speaks of the “guardian of the virgins” who wants to keep the virgin souls as pure and intact as possible and who wants to endow them as beautifully as possible with heavenly goods. The Feast of Candlemas puts the virgin light into the hands of Christ’s brides, so that they may go joyfully to meet the heavenly Bridegroom. On the Feast of the Apparition of the Immaculate Virgin at Lourdes, the virgin souls are lilies which Heaven refreshes with its gracious waters. Mary’s Annunciation wants to show what graces of election can be granted to the virgin souls. The Feast of the Seven Sorrows of Mary leads the virgins to the Myrrh Mountain of the Mystical Sorrows. On Mary’s name day, a church reading says that the light, the sea star is a symbol of virginity.

Because the light sends out the beneficent rays without becoming impure itself, without hurting itself. Thus, every celebration of Mary in the ecclesiastical year contains teachings and graces that enlighten and strengthen, increase and fertilize virginity.

On the feasts of Mary, texts from the Song of the Flea and from the books

of wisdom again. The bride seeks her bridegroom in all ways. Her maidenly service and praise is like a game before the face of the eternal wisdom (Sir 24, 14). For the virgin soul, the admonition to become, if possible, a mirror without blemish resounds again and again. Something of the heavenly sun should be reflected in her heart. The virgin life is heavenly wisdom. The more virginal and pure this life is, the more it unites with the eternal wisdom, with the heavenly Bridegroom. This mystery becomes all the more perfect the more the virgin soul is under the veil of Marian love, as indicated in the consecration of virgins.

2. the accompaniment and help of the holy young women

If we want to initiate a movement for virgins, we must venerate more zealously the parroness of virgins, St. Agnes. In the West, the focus was initially on her feast. A number of the prayers then passed into the consecration of virgins and into the forms of Mass for virgins. In the midst of the flames, she raises her hands to heaven and pleads for help until the fire is extinguished. Today, as an intercessor, she stands before the throne of God: through grace, may the fire of concupiscence be restrained, so that the fire of virginal love may flare up all the higher. With all the fibers of the heart

Agnes longed for her heavenly bridegroom. Through her mediation, may we succeed in making the supernatural bridehood more popular again on earth.

The four young women martyrs, whose feasts used to be celebrated with particular solemnity in Rome, have their own prayer texts in the breviary: Agnes, Agatha, Cecilia and Lucia. The original ideal of virginity appears so vividly before our eyes that it must really arouse enthusiasm. These virgins rejected every lover, no matter how earthly promising the match. No enticements and no threats could dissuade them from their virginal love for Christ. Through miracles, Christ showed how he interceded from heaven for virginal integrity. Such a feast cannot be celebrated by a virgin soul without being rekindled for her virginal ideals.

The virgins of the early Church wanted to become as much like Christ as possible. This included not only virginity, but also martyrdom. This martyrdom had a special value because she could offer her pure virgin flesh for sacrifice. Death was the means to get to the heavenly wedding feast more quickly. Therefore, they thanked God for opening this short and glorious way for them. They owed their fearlessness and strength in suffering to virginity, which made the weak sex strong, even unshakable.

makes it possible. Whoever has fought the battle for virginal purity was also prepared for the battle of martyrdom. In the

church year about ten virgin martyrs are celebrated and more than ı5 at least mentioned.

The prayers used on the feasts of the holy nuns are usually taken from the Office of the Virgins. This brings the vow of chastity to the fore. The virginal way of life, which is perfect, presupposes the love of poverty and obedience, or these virtues then fall as ripe fruit from the tree. In the monastery, virginal contemplation is cultivated above all, which can develop into intimate bridal mysticism. Virginity is the precious pearl. Its value is so highly esteemed that everything earthly no longer counts for anything in the eyes of these virgins. Mystical mysteries of grace take place in the soul, of which the people of the world usually have no idea. Only the virgin souls try to reach something of these spiritual experiences.

There are also some other feasts on which virginity or perfect chastity is especially praised. After Christmas, the Church presents to us the Apostle John, who was allowed to be so close to Christ at the Last Supper because of his virginity. It is often overlooked that the Church also celebrates the Feast of the Innocent Children.

celebrates virginity in high tones. The two feasts of Joseph will also become favorite feasts of virgin souls. We can expect the same on the two feasts of St. John the Baptist. Other saints are also invoked as helpers in the preservation of perfect chastity: *e.g.* Thomas Aquinas, Aloisius, Stanislaus Kostka *etc.* The virgin souls will also be grateful to St. Paul and some of the Fathers of the Church for having so vigorously defended the ideals of virginity.

In the course of the ecclesiastical year, we meet probably forty saints who can be models for the virgin souls especially in their ideals. It is precisely these saints who are ready in heaven to assist the virgins on earth in their struggle with their intercession. So the virgin souls are not abandoned people whom nobody cares about. It seems that the Holy Spirit thought of the virgins with special care when he composed the ecclesiastical calendar throughout the centuries.

3. the Church herself as a spousal mystery in the liturgy.

The Breviary often describes how a virgin martyr, in the midst of the wild beasts, in the midst of the fire or in the dungeon, raises both hands to heaven and prays. We already have this image of the Orante, the praying woman, in the catacombs. It becomes twofold

3. the church itself as a bridal mystery

There as Mary and there as the church. From some liturgical prayers one can see how Mary is understood in many ways as the model of the Church, even on her feasts. The bridal song (Ps 44), according to which the heavenly king marries his queen, is also applied by the church to itself. On virgin feasts, however, the virgin is also compared to this queen. Every holy virgin is an image of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and liturgically, as the bride of Christ, she also bears characteristics of the Church. She is, as it were, a temple or city in the midst of which dwells God, the heavenly Bridegroom. The Bridehood of Christ is celebrated on all three types of feasts: the feasts of Mary, the feasts of the Virgin, and the feasts of the Church.

On the Feast of the Apparition of the Immaculate Virgin Mary, the Mother of God is described as a new Jerusalem adorned like a bride who has adorned herself for her bridegroom (Rev 21:2). On the Feast of the Church, the same text is used for the Church. Both Mary and the Church thus appear in the liturgy as a bride whom Christ, the heavenly Bridegroom, has chosen. Just as Heaven has prepared the future Mother of God as a pure and spotless bride, so the Church should shine with beauty, purity and holiness in order to receive Christ as a Bridegroom in the most worthy manner. The eternal wisdom, the Word of God, can be applied to the Church.

XIX The guidance through the church year

The heavenly wisdom, which, according to the liturgical explanations, found a resting place in Mary, descends. Mary is the gate of heaven through which Christ came to earth. The liturgy also calls the Church a gate of heaven. In her virginal maternity, the Church is undoubtedly similar to the Blessed Virgin and God-bearer Mary. The spousal mysteries that Mary experienced in her life are repeated in the Church. As an image of Mary, the Church is the happy bride, who with her prayers and sacrifices, with all her activity, is at the service of the heavenly Bridegroom. At the consecration of the virgin it is said that Christ descends as the bridegroom and “opens his throne to the heart of the virgin”. At the consecration of the church, Christ descends into the house of God and takes up His abode there, just as He entered the house of Zacchaeus. He unites and marries himself to the Church. The church is not just a building, but the community of believers. A mystical communion is established in which Christ as Head enters into a supernatural relationship with the believers as members. The Church, then, is a bride

consecrating herself to her heavenly Bridegroom. The mysteries of bride and bridegroom are also repeated between the Church and Christ (Rev 21:2). On every church feast, the Church stands as a bride before the virginal

Soul. If a virgin soul penetrates deeper into these feast mysteries, which are celebrated at least four times a church year, they can also gain something for their virgin ideals. The manifold symbolism of the liturgy also widens the circle of vision of the virgin souls.

The evil enemy persecutes through people not only the virgins, but the Church in general. If the holy virgins have won the victory over the “tyrant”, the Church will do it even more gloriously. Before the great ones of the world, the brides of Christ have borne witness to the divine Savior in the Holy Spirit. The church will withstand the surge of the evil powers that is rushing against the Jerusalem of the new covenant. For she stands on the rock and is united with Christ. The Church is even more unshakable than Lucia, whom the Holy Spirit made a solid pillar. If the Church is attacked or wounded, like St. Agatha, or if something is stolen from her, a messenger from heaven appears to heal her again or to assure her integrity. Considered in its earthly extent and impact, the Church occasionally seems so weak to us. But on the feasts of the virgins it is constantly proclaimed that Christ has given supernatural victory to the weak. The veil of St. Agatha, with which the fire of Etna was quieted, is a symbol of the Church’s strength. In her

virgin integrity, the Church always pushes back the fire of concupiscence.

The church is a maid, so Cecilia indicates, who serves her heavenly bridegroom with bee’s diligence. Even more eagerly than this saint, she scatters her seed everywhere and grants chaste teachings. From wild lions she makes mild little lambs. Like a bride, the Church is always working to offer the most holy and worthy dwelling on earth for the Savior. Like Cecilia, she carries the Gospel perpetually on her breast, so that she can give wise and prudent counsel on every occasion. Over the Church shines that light which followed the virgin saints even into the dungeon. Christ adorns His bride, the Church, with the most precious jewels, with the most glorious precious stones, as it is said on the feast of the Church. Heaven sends down the white roses of innocence and the red roses of love not only to St. Cecilia, but also to the Church. Through this fragrance the Church attracts the good people. It is not in vain that the Church is constantly waiting for new mysteries and not in vain that she is always singing a new song. The mysteries of grace take place silently and in secret. As the Bride of Christ, the Church denkr first of all to the young women and lets them participate in her mysteries. The virgin souls, therefore, enjoy the special protection and loving care of the Church during the liturgical year. This gives them the

Awareness that they are truly the favorites of their heavenly Bridegroom. The Church always renews the ladder of heaven in the liturgy in order to keep the relationship between bride and bridegroom alive.

4 The Bridehood of Christ as a Basic Liturgical Idea

On the feast of Epiphany, the chaste light appears over Jerusalem, over the Church. It is often said in the liturgy that the Sun, Christ, emerged from the Blessed Virgin Mary. The light has a virginal character because it can enter and go out without hurting. In the Incarnation of Christ, the divine and human natures were united. That is why the feast of Epiphany also recalls the wedding at Cana. Through this wedding, the mystery of Good Friday is also foreshadowed. From the side wound of Christ, the Church emerges as a bride and Christ makes the new covenant in His blood. It is the wedding of the Lamb! The transfigured Christ rises from the sealed tomb, similar to the way he was once born from the closed garden of the womb. The Risen Christ also appears to the apostles in the hall, although the door was closed. The transfigured body shines with light. The liturgy of Holy Saturday begins with the striking of light or fire from a stone. The paschal candle,

made of beeswax, is a symbol of the virgin flesh of Christ sacrificed on the cross. On Pentecost, Christ sends down with His Father from the divine light the fire of the Holy Spirit. In the heart of the Church, the Bride of Christ, the fire shall burn unquenchably. Christ as the Head unites himself bride-like with the Church, with his mystical body.

The liturgy says several times during the Christmas season that one can now look at the Son of God with human eyes. It rejoices especially because the human dress shines in the young virginal glow. The body of Jesus Christ was formed from the virgin blood of Mary. Christ in the manger is before

us in the form of an innocent child. As an innocent lamb, Christ shed His virgin blood on the cross for mankind. The virgin character was also a reason which made the sacrifice more precious and pleasant. After the resurrection, the spirituality and virginity of the body could be seen even more gloriously. The Savior himself once taught that there was something virginal about the transfiguration of the resurrected. At Pentecost, the Spirit of Christ also passes over to the apostles, the disciples and the believers, uniting them into one mystical body. In early Christian times, some imagined that heaven had placed a veil of red flames over the head and members of the Church. Already at the Jordan

Christ washes this mystical bride clean, as indicated at Epiphany. When the mystical body of Christ is completed at the end of time, it will be presented by Christ to the Father in heaven. Then he appears in the brightest splendor.

In front of the manger, the Church exhorts us to become children of God and thus images of the divine Child. If we have the sanctifying grace, the ring of the Holy Spirit, as it were, unites the divine and the human in our hearts. This nuptial marriage was already indicated by the baptism of Christ at the Jordan, which is mentioned by the liturgy at Epiphany. Before the wedding, the bridal bath used to be given here or there, by which people were supposed to become other, new people. The purification and pardon of the human soul is a fruit of the baptism of blood on Golgotha. The Paschal liturgy describes how people are born again of water and the Holy Spirit to a new life. The newly baptized are born of God and therefore they become children of God and are Christ-like. Water and blood, which

flowed from the side wound of Jesus, symbolize baptism and Eucharist, through which man is united with Christ. The new life of grace makes the soul a bride of Christ. Even with fire the Christian is to be baptized. Confirmation kindles a special flame of the Holy Spirit in the heart of God’s children. The confirmed carries

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The more he perseveres in virtue and the more zealous he is in good works, the more beautiful is the garment promised to him. The more persevering he is in virtue and the more zealous he is in good works, the more beautiful is the wreath which is promised to him. The virgin consecration indicates that a virgin soul experiences all these mysteries in a heightened degree.

In front of the manger, the Church liturgy places virgin saints. The virgin Stephen is a model of virgin servitude and virgin apostolate. The Apostle John, the love disciple of Jesus, is the great prophet of the virgin promises. The innocent children are the first to achieve these promises. The three gifts that the wise men brought, gold, frankincense and myrrh, are also addressed by some writers as virgin symbols. At Easter, the newly baptized form the following of the Lamb, those newly baptized with their candles who have washed their clothes white in the blood of the Lamb. The white lambs follow the divine shepherd who sacrificed his life. They bear the new name of baptism and sing the new song in Alleluia. On White Sunday, John points to the mysteries by which they have and increase the new life: Water, Blood and Spirit - -, Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation. On Pentecost, the multitude of the faithful stands before us in new splendor. As members of Christ, they carry the bowls of the fire of heaven.

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4. bridehood of Christ as a basic liturgical idea

mels and follow their head, the royal spouse. Christ dwells, as it were, among the ies. The church is a tree, in the two of which the pure leaves, the sealed ones of the

spirit dwell.

xXX.

THE angelic LIFE OF THE VIRGINS ON EARTH

1. the necessity of the angelic filfe.

The angel Gabriel was sent to the “Virgin of Virgins” in Nazareth to announce to Mary that she was chosen to be the Mother of God. Immediately a difficulty arose: how is virginity preserved? The angel was able to report that virginity was not merely spared, but even wonderfully glorified (Lk 1:26, 35). But the mystery also offered a difficulty in the relationship between Mary and Joseph: Joseph could not understand it! The angel was also sent to him to enlighten him. Joseph is destined to be the great protector of virginity (Mt 1,20). Without a doubt, the angels also helped both the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joseph later to fulfill their mysterious virginal mission. Gabriel, therefore, became the angel of virginity. For the mystery of virginity he has become the messenger, the teacher, the helper, protector and companion. This virginity in this glorious form was something new. The angels had to come from heaven to assist her on earth.

In the early Church, virginity soon came into conflict. First they tried it with

1. the necessity of the angelic help

Flattery and promises were used to dissuade the virgins from their intentions. This was all the more tempting and dangerous, the less even the nobility of society knew how to honor and appreciate virginity. How could virginity save itself in this fire, among the lions? The virgins were completely calm because they were fully convinced that the angels were standing by them. Agatha and Cecilia said that the angel would extinguish the fire. Martina found the angel ready when she came to the place of martyrdom. Christina was freed by an angel. It is striking how the angels were eager to protect the virginity at the martyrdom. It was, as it were, a struggle with the dragon who rose up in human form against the virginity. With the help of the angels, probably led by Michael, the virgins became victors.

Occasionally, the enemies of virginity aimed to disgrace virginity through physical disfigurement. But the virgins did not shrink from this. The messengers of heaven appeared to heal the wounds gloriously. Shouldn’t the angels, who also have to protect the human body, give special help to the virgin body in distress?

It was not easy to fulfill a young virgin task on earth, a task which especially the new Christianity took credit for, The world had little understanding for it

and caused many obstacles and difficulties. However, the pagans already had an idea. The virgins are gladly seen from heaven and have the help from above. Thus, it was nothing special that the virgins in the early Church certainly expected that the angels would be at their side. Agnes and Cecilia therefore declared that their virginity was under

angelic guidance. Already in the old covenant the bride of God was entrusted to an angel. The Church, as the Bride of Christ, also had an angel as a companion. So the thought was obvious that the more the world wanted to make life difficult for the virgin brides of Christ, the more eager Heaven was to grant them angelic help.

2. the ladder of heaven between the bride and groom

What St. Agnes once said with joy is repeated in the consecration of the virgin after the handing over of the ring: “I am married to the one whom the angels serve”. Certainly, in this saying is expressed for the time being that the bridegroom lives in heavenly glory. But it could also contain a request to the angels to give all attention to the bride on earth. The services of the angels also consist in mediating between the bride and the bridegroom. It is difficult for a human being to make the relationship with Christ ideal as a bridal relationship.

tions. That is why you must seek the help of the heavenly spirits. The heavenly bridegroom is the king who dwells high up in heaven. The bride dwells on the distant earth and is quite clumsy in supernatural matters. Therefore, a ladder to heaven is erected between the bride and the bridegroom, on which the angels ascend and descend. Cecilia said that the angel would give her all the love and come down to her.

If the angels want to bring joy to Christ, they must also show reverence to His bride. The angel met Mary in the chamber with a reverent greeting. In it there was also a special reverence for the virginity. Gabriel surely knew the importance of virginity in the Christian work of salvation.

The angels will be concerned to bring to fruition and unfold every bridehood of Christ. If one speaks of a spousal relationship, a certain intimacy is also included. But because there is such an enormous distance between the heavenly bridegroom and the virgin, the spousal relationship must be formed with the greatest reverence. The angels, who veil their faces before God with their wings, are an example of this reverence. This is always the great question for a virgin: How must I behave as the bride of Christ before the face of the heavenly Bridegroom? From the angels we learn the supernatural forms of the bridal

Behavior. The angels help the Virgin to prepare and equip herself well for the encounter with the Bridegroom. Should it not be her joy to bring the brides of Christ more often to the divine Savior in the mysteries of the liturgy and the mysticism of grace?

Already in the Old Covenant it is explained how the cherubim have many eyes to behold deeply the mysteries of God. In the Secret Revelation, the angels participate in the opening of the book that contains the secrets of Christ. So, the angels also know the spiritual plans Christ has for His brides. The brides of Christ are called to know more than others about the mysteries of God in their contemplative life. The angels will deliver to them the contemplations and intercessions, the gifts and presents of the heavenly Bridegroom. They will also work to make the brides of Christ receptive to them. The virgin souls should be elated or winged, much like the seraphim, so that they may rise more easily and intimately to Christ and give themselves to their Bridegroom. The prayers and sacrifices, all the good works of

the virgins carry many human imperfections. They are to be purified and perfected by the angels so that they may truly become bridal gifts. The angels will place these bridal gifts on the heavenly altar of smoke and offer them to the heavenly bridegroom on behalf of the virgins (Tob ı2, 12).

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3. the resemblance of the virgins to the angels

As far as it is supernaturally possible, virginity leads people back to paradise. Of course, the virgin soul does not achieve the desirelessness that once existed in paradise. With grace, however, the virgin becomes master over the desires. Their integrity and purity are somewhat reminiscent of the paradisiacal light dress of innocence. Therefore, they may enter into an intimate relationship with Christ, which we call bridal. She “hears the voice of God, the Lord, who walks through paradise in the blowing of the wind after noon” (Gen. 3:8). According to the prayers of the consecration of the virgin, the angels are to see to it that the virgin remains as faithful as possible to this spousal condition. At the gates of this virginal paradise, a cherub is placed as a guard, so that the intercourse with Christ is not disturbed by anything worldly. The holy virgins have praised the angels as their “guardians”.

3. the resemblance of the young women to the angels

The angels form the court of God in heaven, the environment of the Lamb (2 Chr 18, 18. Rev 5,ı1). The virgin souls may be closest to Christ. They represent the entourage. The Church Fathers speak of two kinds of angels who may be near Christ: In heaven the actual angels and on earth the virgin souls. Jerome writes: “The innocent and chaste ones

Souls form, as it were, a new family of angels". After the first reading on virgin feasts, the liturgy describes how the holy virgins are received into heaven among the host of angels. This happens because they have become like the angels through virginity.

On the feast of the angelic Aloisius, the Mass prayers begin with the Psalm: "Little among the angels you have placed him" (Ps 8:6). The angels receive something from the divine light because they are allowed to look into the face of God (Mt 18,10). It is given to the pure to see God, and therefore they become angelic. The angels are figures of light (2 Cor II, 14). In early Christian times, the Virgin Martyrs were often seen in the dungeon, being surrounded by the heavenly light. In the preface of the consecration of the virgins, the virgin souls are compared to stars. There or there the angels are also called stars. Thus, we always encounter the view that the virgins are similar to the angels.

As spirits, the angels are undivided beings, which are only open for God. The apostle Paul praises something of this undividedness after the virgin souls (I Cor 7,33), since they also have something spiritual about them. The need for complementation recedes in virgins and thus they become much more inward. Their being becomes more closed and elevated. The spiritual or mental life should be

become all the more pervasive and alive. From their whole striving it follows that they become more similar to the

angels than others.

The angels are “serving spirits” (Hbr 1,14). Those angels who did not want to serve were cast into hell. The good angels “stand before God” and “wait” for His commands (Lk 1:19. Dn 7:10). Humble obedience is their delight. Virgin souls could not be compared to angels if they did not gladly give themselves to the service of God. Following Mary’s example, they call themselves “handmaids,” servants of Christ. The brides of Christ must have something of the obedient, “serving spirits” about them. They stand before God because they are always in readiness. Since they are as eager, as quick and willing as the angels, their service also reminds us of the “winds and flames of fire” (Ps 103:4). They are seized by the blowing or fire of love.

The angels work mostly quite invisibly and quite silently. In the vicinity of God, it must be silent. The work of a virgin soul is modest and hidden. Once it has completed a task, it disappears again immediately, without waiting for recognition or praise. So she remains in the background and does not want to stand out with her name. She is silent about her good works. She does not disdain to occupy herself with the commonplace and ordinary, as Mary did with Elizabeth. So, as far as it is possible, she lives before

veils the human being. Such behavior is genuinely virginal, angelic. The Word of God, the heavenly Bridegroom, descends into this mysterious silence, as it is said in the liturgy on the Sunday after Christmas (Wis 18:14).

4. the angelic forms of the young virgin life

In the Holy Scripture we read: “At the resurrection they will neither marry nor be given in marriage, but they will be like the angels of God in heaven” (Mt 22:30). Based on this saying of Jesus, the Fathers of the Church have called the virgin souls “angels on earth”. Thus, something spiritual and heavenly is attributed to virgins because they did not give in to the bodily and earthly need for marriage and family. Although they still live “under the earthly conditions of mortals”, they choose “an angelic way of life”, as it is said in the Consecration of Virgins. The Church speaks of an “angel in the flesh” on the feast of St. Aloisius.

angelic, of course, is the virgin life only when the bride of Christ peels herself away from the world. She passes through the world without being touched by it. Not only bodily, but also spiritually she must remain intact. She is driven by heavenly confidence. Earthly things are too transient, too uncertain for her. Therefore, she reaches for the heavenly and divine.

chem, which holds all promises within itself. Towards the world, it becomes unapproachable, untouchable. Instead, it opens itself completely to the light and grace of Christ. Towards the earthly it is distant and strange, at least independent and free. The heavenly is close to her and at home. This does not make her dreamlike, but only more spiritual and real. In the case of Angela Merici, it was therefore declared that she “lived according to angelic custom.

It is not necessary for such a virgin to look emaciated and emaciated, but she will mortify herself to the right degree

and fast and practice penance and renunciation, so that the body may become serviceable to the spirit. As soon as the bodily movements are completely controlled from above, man becomes completely clear and transparent. The more the earthly heaviness gives way, the more light-filled is the virgin. The spiritual emerges more strongly and the spiritual moves further out. Certainly, the virgin does not experience the miracle of St. Thomas Aquinas, to whom an angel extinguished the desires with a belt. In the virginal state one goes “beyond the habits of nature”. One sacrifices oneself voluntarily, out of love for Christ. Man girds himself by penance and strengthens himself by supernatural means to be able to lead a higher, a spousal and mystical life. The human being thus takes on something spiritualized and transfigured, something angelic.

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XX, The angelic Life of Virgins on Earth

The bridegroom of the virgin soul is in heaven. That is why St. Ambrose advises on virgin feasts to get also the way of life from heaven. She finds a model for this in the angels. From the angels, therefore, the Virgin learns zeal in prayer, a sense of contemplation and contemplation, servitude to Christ. As the angels in their love of God are like flames of fire, so the fire of love blazes in the little lamp of virginity. Her way of life is more heavenly than earthly. The perseverance in this spousal life would not be possible if she did not find angelic support from heaven.

The Virgin must strive to become more and more angelic. That is why she should venerate the angels intimately, as the liturgy suggests to her on several feasts of the angels. Incidentally, the Virgin stands in the circle of angels every day at Holy Mass. In the sacrifice of the Mass she renews her

spousal covenant with Christ. At least five times the angels appear to show the Virgin how to pay homage to the heavenly Bridegroom. This shows how largely the spousal life is guided by the angels. For this reason, the liturgy everywhere and always encourages the virgins to partake of “the food and the drink,” that is, to imitate the way of life that the angels have in heaven (Tob 12:19). Already in the old covenant, God granted His bride “the food of angels” (Wis 16,

5. virgins as angels among men

20). The word which the Church applies to St. Aloisius applies to all virgin souls in general: “He gave them the bread of heaven. The bread of the angels man ate” (Ps.

77 24).

5. the young women as angels among men

A virgin who is immersed in prayer is often called an angel. Like the “angelic tongues” she praises God (1 Cor 13:1). In pictures, the angels, who later appear in the form of virgins, are often depicted wearing priestly garments because they are so close to the altar of heaven, where they offer prayers and sacrifices like incense. In early Christianity, the lay priesthood of virgin souls was strongly emphasized, and thus their resemblance to angels was also emphasized. In the dungeon, some saw the virgins and the angels praying side by side. St. Cecilia converted her lover through the angel and thus she became a model in the religious apostolate. Precisely because of their angelic nature, the virgins are often able to do more than others. In the charitable field, the virgin souls are the angels of love above all others. In the early Christian era, both the angels and the virgins were imagined in the form of deacons. Especially in the service of the Church they came close to each other. For the angels are ministering spirits and the virgins are spiritualized handmaidens of Christ. Both are completely filled with priestly sacrificial love.

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XX. The angelic Life of Virgins on Earth

Why do virgins often receive the name of angels when they are engaged in charitable or apostolic work among people? They often appear unexpectedly, at the right moment, as if sent from above, equipped with heavenly goods. Their spousal spirit of faith enables them to have deep insights. They are guided only by holy intentions, without desiring anything earthly. In their hearts they carry secrets of grace, which give them extraordinary powers. They have something of a heavenly being about them, and so they stand before men as messengers of heaven and understand their dignities and offices and tasks primarily religiously and heavenly.

Like the angels, they come suddenly, in the “thousand cases” where people fail, in the embarrassments where one needs great, almost superhuman help. To the sky one has called in the trouble whether he has no messenger or helper. Now he sends the virgins. The virgin vigilance and readiness is also revealed in social charitable works. The spirit of sacrifice, which does not shrink from the unpleasant and difficult, from the desperate and dangerous, transfigures everything they approach, which they attack. Even the wicked sometimes stand still in awe and look up. It seems to them as if the angels were dripping heavenly dew into the earthly fire, as with the three young men in the furnace.

The virgins are appraisers and helpers like

5. virgins as angels among men

the angels. They especially stand up for innocence, for which they would sacrifice everything. They defend justice and righteousness as established by God. That is why God anointed them with the virgin oil of heaven. In themselves, the virgins have experienced how God helps the weak. So they also want to be angels to the weak on earth. With sadness they see how people let themselves be weighed down too much by material and earthly things. Therefore they promote everywhere the spiritual, religious and heavenly. People are deceived by so many interests, by self-interest and selfishness. The virgin souls are therefore called to be always concerned about the common good. They do not want to rule, but to serve, focused only on the glory of Christ. When one meets such virgin souls in the world, people exclaim with the devotees of St. Juliana Falconieri: “Not a man, but an angel has been born to the world”.

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XXI.

THE VIRGIN LIFE IN THE BREEZE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

1. the young spousal union in the Holy Spirit

The angel said to Mary, “The Holy Spirit will descend upon you” (Lk 1:35). It is the Holy Spirit who brings the Word of God from heaven. Between Mary and the Son of God, between the Bride and the heavenly Bridegroom, the Holy Spirit blows, which establishes the nuptial union. The Fathers of the Church explain that it happened in two ways. First, the Blessed Virgin received the Word of God in faith

and became a virgin bride in the mystical sense. Secondly, Mary conceived the Son of God in the Holy Spirit and thus became the real mother of Jesus. Over the root of Jesse, according to the prophecy, the Holy Spirit hovers: “The Spirit of the Lord will settle on him” (Is ı1, 2). The Holy Spirit unites human nature with divine nature in the second person of the Trinity. This is the model of the spousal union between man and God.

On Pentecost, everyone in the room was “filled with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:4). The Mother of God, who was there, the model of the Catholic Church, is with Jesus, her resurrected

1. virgin-bride union in the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit has united the two persons with the Son of God in heaven, as the Savior had ordained on the cross. Following this example, the Holy Spirit establishes a mystical communion between Christ as Head and the faithful as members. The mystical body of Christ, the Church, is formed. Between the Church as the bride and Christ the Lord as the heavenly bridegroom, the Holy Spirit again hovers and establishes a mystical covenant. Every Christian as a member of the mystical body will enter into a spousal union with Christ as the Head. But the Virgin will make this spousal relationship much more intimate with the special help of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will be poured out on her “flesh” in her own virginal way, as the Church Fathers point out (Acts 2:17). The eyes of virgins are in their hall, preparing to receive the Bridegroom. Their waiting is a faithful and hopeful longing, a constant praying and pleading. From afar, at last, comes the Bridegroom, the eternal Wisdom. But the Word of God does not appear alone. The Holy Spirit is always present, though often hidden.

Between the bride and the bridegroom a fire flares up, the flame of love. Through the love of the Holy Spirit, the spousal relationship is formed and enlivened. In the fire of the little lamp that the wise virgins have in their hands, this love is symbolized. For the Holy

Spirit has kindled the light. The dialogue between bride and bridegroom is guided and animated by the Holy Spirit. Word and answer are permeated by his breath, anointed by his oil.

Astonished, the judge asks the 5). Lucia at the martyrdom: “Is the Holy Spirit in you?” He felt that a secret power was working in the virgin. He wanted to destroy this mysterious power first. Therefore, he decreed that the virginity of the saint be taken away. But the Holy Spirit gave her the firmness of a pillar that could not be moved. So he wanted to burn her alive in the square. The Holy Spirit did not allow an earthly fire to hurt her. Even the pagans should recognize that the Virgin was filled with the Holy Spirit. This Holy Spirit is the best defender of virginity. We read of many holy virgins that the fire of the Holy Spirit burned in their hearts, as in a bowl. All virgins are called to faithfully guard the fire of love in their temple.

2. the consecration of the young virgin soul by the Holy Spirit

The reception of the vow or the making of the promise is only a prerequisite for the consecration of a virgin, which does not take much time. The main thing is the consecration, the consecration of the virgin soul. The high priest, the bishop, appears, who has high consecration power, to

2. consecration of the virgin soul by the Holy Spirit. Spirit

not only to communicate the Holy Spirit, but to bestow graces and gifts in great abundance. Of her spousal spirit, which is given to her, the Church wants to grant as much as possible to the virgins. In this the love of the Church for virgin souls is revealed, that she wants to lower her innermost and best into their hearts. The Church draws the brides of Christ to herself and lets them share in her bridehood. What she possesses and bestows is the spirit of Christ. It is precisely the virgin spirit that grasps and permeates and transfigures even the corporeal. The more receptive virgins are, the more they are filled with the spirit of Christ. They consecrate themselves in all love and sacrifice and offer themselves. They are seized and lifted up by heaven, by the Holy Spirit. They are truly consecrated virgins.

The consecration of virgins is a mystical covenant, a marriage with Christ. The ring is the symbol of the bond that unites her to the heavenly Bridegroom. This ring of fidelity is “the seal of the Holy Spirit.” The bond is closed and is not to be dissolved. That is why the Holy Spirit puts his seal on it. He affirms and fastens and preserves everything. This is not to be shaken any more. It is the sign of the Holy Spirit that commands reverence and faithfulness. The consecration of the virgins was done in public. As it were in the face the

Virgins this sign. It is the sign that they belong to Christ alone as brides. The seal must not be broken, neither from the outside nor from the inside. The virgins are sealed.

Virginity is a garment woven by the Holy Spirit and interwoven with His gold. It resembles a paradisiacal garment of light. Church history testifies that some holy virgins were surrounded by the light of the Holy Spirit. The wreath or crown reminds the virgin that Christ is her head, whom she must obey and serve. With a veil the Holy Spirit envelops the virgins. Like fire of the Holy Spirit, it surges and flames, pointing to the mysterious powers that are hidden. The virgins live under the veil, in the silence of the Holy Spirit.

In the last prayer of the consecration of virgins, the Church implores: “May the Spirit of the seven-shaped grace rest upon you and fill you. Strengthen the infirm and invigorate the weak. He guide them in their ways and instill in them holy thoughts…. He enlighten them with wisdom and edify them with love and perfect their works…. Prepare them for patience and make them willing to obey…. In sickness may he afflict them, in temptation may he protect them, and in heart may he comfort them. In prosperity may he be moderation to them, and in wrath mitigation….. discipline may he grant them.”

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3. the extraordinary gift of the Holy Spirit

The beauty and goodness of virtue that these virgins should have is above all the work of the Holy Spirit. Thus the preface says: “Prudent modesty, wise kindness, earnest gentleness, and chaste freedom may you bestow upon them through the gift of your Spirit, O Lord. “The virgin souls are vessels which the Holy Spirit fills with his blessings, temples which he has adorned with his ornaments.

3. the extraordinary gift of the Holy Spirit

At the consecration of virginity itself, the virgin soul is reminded of the supernatural powers she received at baptism. As a child of God, she was “born not of blood, not of the will of the flesh, but of the Holy Spirit.” The water is the symbol of the fact that she has received not merely heavenly purity, but a supernatural brightness and inner freshness. In the ceremony of the salt rests the thought that she possesses the heavenly wisdom and holds within her the imperishable and fruitful life of grace. Her eyes and

Ears are opened to the supernatural mysteries. In baptism, therefore, are contained germs for the virginal. Of course, these ideals would have to be fully developed. A certain insufficiency remains, however. The devil imitates the virgins in a deceptive and subtle way. This is all the more dangerous, the more unfamiliar the virginal life is.

is a special gift on earth. A virginal vocation also requires a special gift, which is why “a special gift must flow down from the source of goodness”.

The Church puts something spousal in Confirmation. The mixture of oil and balsam symbolizes the union of the human and the divine through the Holy Spirit, The hymn even speaks of the virgin birth of Mary. The chrism is the oil of joy with which the soul is showered according to the bridal song of the Church. If the Virgin is always to be victorious in her special battles, she needs special weapons and extraordinary powers of the Holy Spirit. For the weaknesses of human nature and the wiles of the world could easily make her faithfulness waver. In St. Matthew’s Prayer of Consecration of the Virgin, the Church implores all

the equipment for the extraordinary struggle and invokes the appropriate help and blessings of the Holy Spirit. The Virgin should not stumble or get stuck on her bridal path.

In the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation, the image of eternal wisdom is imprinted in the soul, and the Holy Spirit not only seals it, but takes up residence there to guard and beautify it. Every soul becomes a bride of Christ through sanctifying grace. The more receptive the Christian is, the more refined the spousal purity and transfiguration, the spousal life and the heavenly life become.

lish fragrance of the virtues. However, the apostle Paul points out how strongly the flesh opposes the spirit. Certainly, the body is not an evil principle, as some false teachers thought. After the original sin, however, it is plagued by desires. Often they are the obstacle for the spirit to be fully effective. Paul exhorts all Christians to live “not according to the flesh” but “according to the spirit.” “Walk in the Spirit!” (Rom 8:5, Gal 5:16). Especially the virgins have to become “people of the spirit” (Cor3, 1). Now this elevation is no small matter. If the ordinary Christian already needs the help of grace, the virgin soul must have even higher support. The Holy Spirit grants her the special spousal pardon and strengthening, the virginal elevation and consecration.

By an epistle it was indicated in former times that one thinks of the virgin consecration as a temple consecration (Cor 3, 16). Originally, a place of worship was consecrated simply with the offering of the sacrifice of the Mass. St. Cecilia wanted to suffer three days in martyrdom so that her

dwelling house would be accepted as the temple of God. Through the sacrifice of her young virgin life it was to receive a consecration. This was certainly a justified conception that there was something consecratory in the virginal sacrifice as such. Through the fire of love of the Holy Spirit, the earthly offering is transformed, as it were, from flesh to spirit, into new, higher life.

transformed. The corporeal is taken up and transfigured as far as possible into the spiritual. The virgin is like a temple, which the Holy Spirit wafted with his fragrance of grace. The Holy Spirit himself pours into the heart of the royal bride the oil of joy (Ps44 8). Some once had the opinion that the virgins and martyrs do not need to be specially consecrated. Heaven itself consecrates them by lowering the fire of the Holy Spirit on the sacrifice. Where virginity occurs, the Holy Spirit is immediately present, since he belongs essentially to the virgin bridehood of Christ. Some say that this is also a reason why the laying on of hands and the anointing with oil are omitted in the consecration of virgins. Of course, the prayers, especially the Eucharistic prayer, and the presentation of the symbols are of great importance. The virgin soul shines most beautifully when it is included in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. After Communion, St. Agnes exulted: “The blood of my Spouse now adorns my cheeks!” If the evil enemy sees this blood, he will pass by. Even if sprinkling with blood does not take place outwardly, as in the Old Covenant, the spousal covenant is renewed in every sacrifice of the Mass. With the blood of Christ in her heart, the virgin bride enters the heavenly sanctuary.

4. powers of confirmation in virgin impact

4. the powers of confirmation in young virgin effect

Confirmation enhances the royal dignity that Christians received at baptism. The confirmation increases the royal dignity that Christians received at baptism. When the prophets in the Old Covenant anointed the kings with oil, the Holy Spirit descended upon them. Through the Holy Spirit, Christians are enabled to exercise good judgment, to govern themselves and others well, and to fight courageously for the faith. All this is to be understood in a special way by virgin souls. For they have been royally chosen and royally equipped. In royal beauty they appear before men and in royal righteousness they walk their paths, also in royal dignity an image of Christ. The virgin is not merely placed in the king’s court, as is depicted in the basilicas, but, according to the bridal song, she is a “queen” and wears the wreath or diadem of her election,

irradiated by the light of the Holy Spirit. Both in the consecration of the Chrism and in the consecration of the virgin it is mentioned that the

High Priest Aaron anointed with oil and with the

been endowed with gifts of the Holy Spirit

be. Christ first of all attracts the abstaining seeds, the virgin people, to his

Proximity. As spirit-filled brides of Christ, the

virgin souls even more called than

other Christians to participate in the service of God, in the apostolate. In early Christian times, the

XXI The Virgin Life in the travail of the Holy Spirit

the virgins are in some respects compared to the deacons, without having received the spiritual orders. They are priestly in that they offer themselves and make sacrifices for the Church. In their piety they pray and make atonement and sacrifice, and in their good works they practically proclaim the Gospel to the poor and the sick, to the little ones and the abandoned. In everything they are concerned to nourish and keep intact the mystical fire of God’s love.

The Holy Spirit, which is given at Confirmation, also grants enlightenments and inspirations, deeper insights and more pious moods. These are the prophetic graces that the Church means by the consecration of the chrism. Christians, including virgins, do not usually receive extraordinary gifts, as they were common in early Christianity. The virgin daughters of Philip the deacon were gifted prophetically (Acts 21:9). Later, the virgin souls were often called prophetic because they waded intimately with heavenly wisdom. The virgins not only had a deep understanding of the mysteries and promises of the faith, but they were also zealous and enthusiastic in religious pursuits. Perhaps they also occasionally exhorted others to repentance or comforted them with the truths of Christianity.

Confirmation is the initiation for the struggle for faith and virtue, for

5. virgin chastity with its gifts

the Church and Christ, even the gracious preparation for martyrdom when it becomes necessary. The martyrs were promised the special assistance of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the early Christians were not at all surprised when the martyrs revealed an extraordinary heavenly power. Since the virgins were spirit-filled Christians, a glorious martyrdom was also expected from them. Through the abstinent life, through the defense of virginity, these virgin souls were trained in struggle and renunciation and suffering. Christ, the Lamb of God fetched them in martyrdom to the heavenly wedding feast. The virginity celebrated there its

highest triumphs on earth: Both in the

numerous miracles as in the joyful endurance of the most bitter torments. Often appeared

the virgins on the place of execution like a

Ark of the Covenant, which no one was allowed to touch.

With the spirit that rested over the ark of the covenant,

the Israelites have already won their victories

and conquered the promised land.

J. Young chastity with its gifts, fruits and blessings

Throughout the centuries the word of admiration resounds: “O how beautiful is a chaste generation in the splendor of virtue” (Wis 4:1). Even more glorious is the paradisiacal splendor with which the Holy Spirit surrounds virginity. A

virgin body, which is laid on the altar as a sacrifice in spousal love, is much more beautiful than a virgin body.

more pleasant than the sacrifice of Solomon. Heaven opens and the fire of the Holy Spirit descends. The pleasure of the heavenly Father rests on the sacrifice. Paul, who described the virginity in deep reverence, speaks of a temple. In artful beauty it stands before the eyes of men. But all visible splendor would not give it the real majesty, dignity and holiness. The Holy Spirit descends and overshadows and permeates the whole virgin house. The glowing sacrifice and the spirit-filled temple indicate that the chaste virgins are regarded as spiritualized beings.

But virginal grace and greatness are threatened by dangers: inner weaknesses, outer temptations, Pharisaic pride, the sensual sultriness of our time, *etc.* The Holy Spirit has a gift of His own ready to preserve virginal chastity intact: The gift of fear. Therefore, it has a deeper meaning when the bishop says at the beginning of the consecration of the virgin: “The fear of the Lord I will teach you”. The virgin would like to be frightened when she perceives covetousness on a larger scale. Humble and trusting, she kneels down and prays for the help of the Holy Spirit. Heavenly wisdom gives the Bride of Christ measures for her conduct: Lead a quiet and deadened life! Obey the Church and let it guide you! Be careful and fear the deceptions

5. virgin chastity with its gifts

of the world! Look up and behold the promises of virtue! Such pious virgins may be confident: “The Spirit of the Lord fills the whole world” (Wis 1:7). This is his first and most pleasant task, to be the succor, comforter and helper of virgin souls.

Scholars of God list three special fruits of the Holy Spirit that ripen on the tree of virginity: “modesty, continence and chastity” (Gal 5:23). Others often find the overcoming and penance, the renunciation of the dangerous pleasures and delights of the world, hard and difficult. For the spirit-filled virgins, the exercises soon become pleasant and they become joyful and happy in the process. The contemptuous looks or bad words of the worldly people do not disturb them now. For they are convinced that in the end they will endear themselves to people and to God. The works of a virgin are clear and full of light. For the virgin resembles an angel who, with the power of the Holy Spirit, accomplishes superhuman things. The chaste fear of God is only the beginning of wisdom. On this path there is still high to go. Now the virgin soul has understood what true love is all about.

The virgin striving is crowned at the end with the evangelical beatitudes of the Holy Spirit: “Blessed are the pure in heart. They will look upon God” (Mt 5:8). Already

On earth, the virgins are raised, as it were, to a mountain where their supernatural vision widens. How happy they are

that it has become calm in their hearts, because covetousness has decreased and is mastered with grace. “Blessed are the poor in spirit. For theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 5:3). For the sake of the “kingdom of heaven” they have become virgins. Now they already have it, at least a foretaste of it. So it was worth it to leave everything if possible. After all the struggles, they feel a heavenly peace. They are adorned with the wreath of the victor. The virgin souls are filled with the Holy Spirit and that is why they have become rich. What John says about the virgin souls in heaven, they can anticipate a little. Like St. Cecilia, they already hear some heavenly music!

6. the spiritualization of life and the mystical ascent

The virgins first appear in the history of the Church in the place of martyrdom. It turned out that they were equipped with a mysterious power. With all the temptations and threats, with all the seductions and torments, they simply could not be approached. Inwardly they remained unbroken, unharmed, pure and firm. Shouldn’t this mysterious power also come to bear in the spiritual life? The Holy Spirit did not work on the virgin souls…

The miracles of martyrdom, but also the miracles of grace. The gifts that the virgins receive from their bridegroom are the abilities and powers, the gifts and talents with which the virgins should acquire perfection. The closeness of Christ, the attachment to Christ had to manifest itself as power also in the spiritual life. The bridal mysticism of the Middle Ages proves this.

According to the plan of the Heavenly Father, the Providence of God, the virgins are called to enter into the most intimate spousal union with Christ. Like the shepherds, the three wise men, the people under the cross, the people in the hall or in the city of Jerusalem at Pentecost, they stand a/s called, as chosen ones before the heavenly Bridegroom. The invitation, the call of the Word of God demands a response, not merely an assent, but an enthusiasm, an eager striving for perfection. In the spousal relationship, they must not only serve Christ faithfully and prove fruitful in the apostolate, but also endure external persecutions and internal sufferings. In doing so, they encounter so many difficulties that they must have a helper, the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, who is called, not only teaches them the spiritual life and supports them with his gifts, but also comforts them and strengthens them again and again. He does this through the church, which is called by the Holy Spirit as the “Spirit of God.

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XXI The Virgin Life in the Wake of the Holy Spirit

The bride is called and formed as a “helper” to lead the virgin seclusion up the paths and stages of perfection. The bride leaves her parental home, her former life, her environment and is solemnly transferred to the house of the bridegroom, to a new life, to another milieu. This transition, this change and renewal, is liturgically represented by many symbols: By bringing in an elevator and picking up in a procession, by taking off the old clothes and giving new garments, by the bath of purification and the anointing with oil. But in the mysteries of the liturgy, a transition actually takes place, a rebirth in grace, a transformation through the sacrificial fire, a transformation through the food of communion. The seed is placed in the earth, dies to the old and unfolds to new life and arises as a new flower. The bride leaves everything in the world, even herself, and now follows Christ, unites with Christ and becomes like Him, taking on His form as much as possible. This peeling away and new joining, this dying away and new rising, is also to take place ascetically in the spiritual life. Spousal love wants to sacrifice and abandon the old, and step out of itself and adhere to the bridegroom, believe and trust him, surrender to him most obediently, and accept his life and unite with him as much as possible. In this way, she goes from the old to the new

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6. spiritualization of life and the mystical ascent

The more it succeeds, the higher the degree of perfection.
The more it succeeds, the higher the degree of perfection.

Special emphasis is given to the “spiritualization of life” which the Holy Spirit is supposed to bring about. At Christmas, the liturgy says that one may look at Christ. Simeon is even allowed to carry him on his hands. The apostles live with the Savior in order to hear the heavenly truths from his mouth and to see the miracles and his example of virtue with their own eyes. For they shall one day be able to act as eye and ear witnesses. But now the heavenly bridegroom withdraws in his suffering and dies on the cross. The apostles and the disciples take flight, John excepted. The bridegroom disappears as described in the Song of Songs. Magdalene and the women search for him. The apostles and disciples wait or mourn, inquire or burn in their hearts. Certainly Christ appears again after the resurrection. But in the form of his transfiguration he is so spiritualized that he is difficult to recognize. Magdalene wants to touch him. But the Savior does not allow it. He only wants faith and love from afar. The earthly hopes, which the apostles still have, collapse thoroughly. The admonition that Jesus gives to Thomas applies generally: Blessed are those who do not see and yet believe! Therefore said

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XXI The Virgin Life in the travail of the Holy Spirit

one in the early Church: faith is virginity. It receives the word of God. John recognizes Christ most quickly because he has a virgin look. Finally, Christ ascends to heaven and returns only through his Spirit. Especially the virgins are filled with the Holy Spirit so that they become “spirit people”. After Pentecost, the mysticism of the heart is also specifically evident in the liturgy: In the devotion to the Sacred Heart, in

the veneration of the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar. May the virginal gaze penetrate deeply into the mysteries! The virginal love, which is poured into the hearts and hidden there, must now unfold. The liturgy speaks about the mystical relationship of bride and bridegroom only shyly in the love language of the Song of Songs. The union is often expressed and portrayed in an entirely spiritual way. The Word of God, the eternal Wisdom descends and enters into a supernatural interior covenant of grace in the Mysteries, the love life of which is illustrated by symbols. The virgins are spiritualized beings, similar to angels. Christ purchased the bride with his precious blood on the cross. With the waters of the Jordan he washed her, as the liturgy says on Epiphany. Even his redeemed and chosen virgin souls he has to purify again and again, because in human weakness they often commit imperfections and perfidies. The pouring over with

But water is at the same time a pardon. Even at Pentecost the liturgy speaks of the waters of the Holy Spirit. Occasionally one also encounters the thought that the pious souls are purified by fire. The innermost and deepest must be purified and spiritualized. Fire and light, however, are more the symbols of enlightenment. What begins at Candlemas, Holy Saturday continues and Pentecost completes it. The virgin souls should be the most receptive to what the Church wants to work in people through the liturgy. Through the growth of spousal love, the union between bride and bridegroom should become ever more intimate. According to the mystics, the mystical marriage is much more intimate than the betrothal. Some move the wedding to heaven at all. Only the saints reached the highest mystical levels, which are called mystical betrothal

and marriage. The simple virgin souls, however, should feel obliged to remove again and again the obstacles that degrade and disturb the intimacy of the union. Then the Holy Spirit will make them experience the mystical sweets of the spousal covenant ever more deeply.

John the Baptist, as the leader of the bride, could bring to the lamb of God, the heavenly bridegroom, only those souls who had cast off Pharisaic pride, repented, and showed themselves submissive and humble. In their overconfidence, even individual apostles have

stel promised too much to the Savior. In humility, they had to repeatedly profess love to the Risen Lord until they were ready for the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The more the virgin sacrifices and gives away, the sooner she is able to become and be a pardoned bride of Christ. In solitude and seclusion, in silence and prayer, in penitential works and charity, one prepares oneself for the new life, for the ascent in it, for the illuminations, the guides and the touches of the Holy Spirit. Even if man must prepare himself and strive diligently for perfection, the greatest graces remain a gift of heavenly mercy. The spiritual writers constantly emphasize that especially the virgin life is a grace of the Bridegroom. The virgins must be seized and awakened and carried by the Holy Spirit. The virgins are Spirit-filled. There is no lack of graces. It is only a question of whether they can bear everything. The Savior once said, “You cannot bear it now” (Jn 16:12). Once it is difficult to bear all the sufferings that come in the external and mystical life. But grace itself appears with such force that it would have to crush a weak

person. The Holy Spirit must grant the carrying power. The virgins are like a thorn bush that burns but does not burn.

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xXXil.

THE HEAVENLY PREMONITIONS IN THE VIRGIN LIFE

1. virginity as the “kingdom of heaven” on earth

“The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure” (Mt 13:44). In the Gospel, this treasure certainly means the whole Kingdom of God with its goods. The liturgy, however, often sees virginity in this treasure or pearl. The good of virginity is so great that many sell everything, leave everything, in order to obtain this pearl. People often marvel at how the sun’s brilliance is reflected in a gemstone. It seems to us as if the heavenly colors are revealed. Those virgins who call themselves virgins but do not possess the virgin spirit should be excluded from the joys of the Kingdom of God. Only the wise virgins can have the “kingdom of heaven” (Mt 25:1). “For the sake of the kingdom of heaven” they remained virgins (Mt 19:12). Thus, not only in the goal, but also in the essence of virginity rests something heavenly. Only with Christianity, with the true Kingdom of God on earth, did it come to full fruition. Virginity stands in the middle of the Kingdom of Christ, the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. Some think that already in conjugal love there is a piece of “heaven”. Should the mystical love that characterizes the spousal relationship between virginal

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XXI. Heavenly Premonitions in the Virgin Life

What if, in the image of a heavenly bride and a heavenly bridegroom, we do not prepare a much more glorious heaven? It is not for nothing that we hear it from all virgin masses: Virginity is like the kingdom of heaven! It grasps the Kingdom of God most deeply and does the most for the Kingdom of God.

John describes to us the blessedness that the young virgin souls have in heaven (Rev 14:4). This must have excited the virgins on earth and filled them with longing: If only this virginity could be brought down! With fervency they prayed and pleaded. Really, some of them achieved it! In the preface of the consecration of virgins it is said that virginity comes down from heaven as a gift of grace. The pearl, the precious stone, descends to the earth. Was not the virginity in Mary a miraculous gift from heaven? At the consecration of the Church, the liturgy says that the Bride, the New Jerusalem, “descends from heaven” (Rev 21:2). Every virgin soul is similar to this bride and therefore she carries something heavenly in her. The Church Fathers never tired of presenting the virgin way of life as something heavenly, as something angelic. People would not be able to carry out such a way of life by their own efforts. It comes as a grace from heaven. The virgin souls are “angels” on earth. Virginity in this sense is a “kingdom of heaven” on earth.

Some symbols indicate that you can

1. virginity as the “kingdom of heaven” on earth

wants to introduce the virgins into a heavenly kingdom through the ecclesiastical consecration. The ceremonies often point to the virgin’s heavenly life: the new dress, the enrollment in the multitudes of virgin souls, the seal of the

Holy Spirit, the processional following, the praise of the heavenly Lamb, the wreath or crown. Liturgically, virgins are ushered into a new sphere, a new state, a virginal kingdom of heaven. The bridehood of Christ opens a supernatural kingdom of heaven. The prayers speak of the beginning, of the foundation of the Kingdom of Heaven in the virgin souls. But they also constantly nourish the hope that one day the full consummation will take place in heaven. The virgin life is thus surrounded by a heavenly breath.

The virgin souls are transferred into the house of Christ, into the bridal chamber. This bridal chamber is the temple of God on earth, the church. The church is now, as it were, the heaven that has settled on earth. In the Gospel, the Church is called the Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of Heaven, because a heavenly life unfolds here. To this nuptial life the virgin souls are invited at Christmas. During Lent, they purify the dress to be able to appear truly nuptial at Easter for spousal union with Christ. The Holy Spirit transfigures the nuptial relationship and consecrates the virgin souls to the deepest

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Mysteries. Since the virgin souls live deeply with the spousal church, they also feel deeply that it is supernatural like a heavenly kingdom.

The heavenly joys are compared to a wedding feast. As the consecration of virgins shows, the virgin souls celebrate marriage already on earth, “the marriage of the Lamb” (Rev 19:7). If the friends of the Bridegroom may anticipate something of the joys of the Kingdom of Heaven, this is even more true of the brides of Christ (Mt 9:15). In the liturgical

mysteries and in the mystical experiences of grace, “the royal wedding feast” is already realized for them, as far as it is possible on earth (Mt 22:1). In the mysteries and experiences, especially for the virgin soul, there must already be a foreshadowing of heaven.

2. the longing vigilance

The virgin soul is end-time minded. It longs for heaven, where the bridegroom dwells. She always has the last things before her eyes. And this seriousness gives her life its character. The time of life is short and therefore every moment should be used for eternity. Perhaps the hour of death approaches more quickly than one thinks. Is the soul prepared for it? It is of no value to hang one’s heart on earthly things. One must leave everything soon. The suffering on earth will soon be over. Afterwards follows an eternity full of soul.

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2. the longing vigilance

lities. Only one question hovers before the soul: Can I once answer for everything before God?

The view of eternity makes the wise young woman vigilant: vigilant against the inner inclinations and desires, vigilant against the outer temptations and dangers. She girds herself for battle and takes all precautions: Sobriety, faith, detachment and prayer. She wants to preserve the purity she has vowed at all costs.

How many goods the virgin soul has received at her nuptial consecration! She must not sleep, but she must take care of them. She wants to carry out the tasks she has taken on. She is not indolent, but eager, anxious to gather many good works. The oil in the lamp must not diminish, but it must be increased so that the lamp of love burns ever brighter. With truth and justice, with strength and joy, it is girded and thus it advances and makes progress. It is for this perseverance and advancement that the Church prayed at the Consecration of the Virgin.

Love is where the treasure is. Thus, the heart of the Virgin is centered on heaven. A hundred times the Church spoke of heaven at the Consecration of the Virgin. How tempting are the promises held out to virgin souls! Hope swells the sails of the ship of life. The longing of love is a powerful force. It seems to the virgin as if she were with Stepha

nus would open heaven. Christ invites her to the heavenly wedding. She flies to him as quickly as possible.

The Gospel often speaks of the “strangers of the Bridegroom” who prepare the soul and then lead it to the heavenly King: John the Baptist, the Apostles, the disciples, the priests of the Church. With the liturgy, the Church promotes vigilance and builds the bridge from this world over to heaven. The last time of the Church year is alive and yearning in virginal expectation.

If the virgin does not yet see her bridegroom face to face, she feels close to Christ. Her striving is directed more and more towards the future. Her “Kingdom of Heaven” is the longing joy in the Holy Spirit. Gradually she understands that the preface of the consecration of the virgin speaks of a foreshadowing of the heavenly, of a mystical experience of the divine. In this foretaste of the heavenly, she would like to exclaim with St. Agnes: Already I see and possess what I have longed for and hoped for!

3. the surprise visit of the groom

It is understandable that in the bride’s soul the original Christian cry rises up: Come Lord! The desire, which was initially so strong, also moves the virgin soul: I want to see Christ! In this mood of desire, the Christians have already provided a throne on which the celestial

King can settle down. The virgins prepare their own heart to be a throne for the heavenly bridegroom.

When will the heavenly Bridegroom appear ? Several times the Scriptures emphasize that the hour is not made known. Christ wants to accustom the virgins to be always ready, not only at T'ag, but even at night. Religiously, we must never tire or fall asleep sluggishly. Christ comes not merely gloriously and manifestly, but also unexpectedly and stealthily. Just at that time he may knock at the soul's door when it is seemingly inconvenient. Sometimes he appears suddenly and surprises us, and sometimes he hesitates and makes us wait a long time.

Christ can appear in different guises and that is why some do not recognize him immediately. The Magdalene first sees only the gardener, and the disciples of Emmaus believe they are talking to a pilgrim. Before the apostles he stands in transfigured form, so that they think they have only a spirit before them. To the virgin soul the Bridegroom can come with a grace without her noticing it. In the midst of the business of work, he is there with illuminations and suggestions, just at that moment when she has thought least of it. While she is weighed down by outer worries and inner sufferings, he pours the oil of heavenly joys into her soul. Since she did not wish it at all, he stands before her in the person of a superior and rebukes her

or cheers her up. When she is otherwise already overloaded with trouble, he calls her through a poor or sick person, through a child or an abandoned one. Mystically the bridegroom always dwells near. Happiness of the virgin soul, which does not overlook or overhear him.

In the past, there was a consecration Mass for virgins, in which the Gospel of the “little while” was read (Jn 16:16): “A little while and you see me no more. And again a little while and ye see me again.” In the Song of Songs, the bridegroom visits his bride and then suddenly he disappears again. Although she searches for him for a long time, she does not find him for the time being. The heavenly bridegroom can seemingly withdraw once. Then everything is so arid and dry in the soul. Homesickness is also a religious mood that the virgin soul must go through. There are still earthly attachments or haughty impulses around, which must be stripped away for the time being. Only then the soul opens further and is ready for higher things. Even communion becomes more fruitful the more receptive the soul has become.

It may be that even around pious souls everything seems to darken: Outward worries and inward dryness, outward persecution and inward distress. Like a night it comes over the virgin soul: night of the senses and night of the spirit! But what do we read in the Gospel about the wise virgin?

4. the consolation in virgin dying

At midnight the call goes out, “Behold, the bridegroom cometh” (Mt 25:6)! Isn’t this a beautiful surprise? Christ delivers and redeems from the night of troubles and the captivity of the earthly. In the midst of the night he brings the heavenly light, in the midst of the night of suffering he brings the heavenly power.

4 The comfort of dying young and ladylike

The parable of the wise virgin will be completely fulfilled only when she dies. The bridegroom comes down to take his bride home now. The watchful bride has prepared herself for this. She has been looking forward to the wedding feast for a long time. The liturgy even says of the king that he is looking forward with longing to this heavenly wedding.

In the ecclesiastical prayers for death there is a basic tone which reminds of the bride’s solemn homecoming. A procession is arranged from below: the virgin soul with her protectors and guides. They escort the virgin to the king. The angels, especially the fighter Michael, see to it that the evil dragon does not disturb the entry into eternity. The Virgin herself is adorned like a bride for her bridegroom. From above Christ comes to meet his bride with the heavenly hosts. How wonderfully the greeting sounds now, which the bishop already spoke at the consecration of the virgin in the name of Jesus: Come, bride of Christ

After the liturgy, the Virgin first offers a prayer of thanksgiving. Certainly, the Virgin was not spared struggles and persecutions, agonies and pains of death. But they were only means of liberation. The “evil hour” is now over. The path of suffering ends at the joyful wedding feast. The two virgins who are invoked in the prayers of death are especially helpful to the virgin souls in this transition: Thekla and Lucia. As it was shown in the case of the virgin martyrs, every virginal death should be supernatural and solemn, enthusiastic and nuptial.

Already at the consecration of the virgins, the Church prayed that in the virgins one day “the flame may find nothing to burn them, and the avenger may discover much to crown them”. Those persons to whom the management of the virgins is entrusted will give an account before the court. The virgin souls have “loved justice.” Hopefully, there is now “nothing dirty, secret, injured, or dishonorable” that the judge would have to condemn. The heavenly Bridegroom himself “witnessed” that the virgin was striving for perfection with all zeal. In the virginal way of life she did what Christ himself had especially recommended. Should the Virgin fear that the love of her heavenly Spouse sits as judge before her? The Church strives to bring virgins “as white and shining souls” before the court.

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5. coronation and virgin life in heaven

Virginity is like a gate that is closed to the world. When Christ was gathered with the wise virgins, the door was locked. To the virgin souls, the gate of heaven opens when they pass into eternity. For they are adorned with the cross of Christ, the cross which is the sign of the spousal covenant. They have washed their garments in the blood of the Lamb.

Their garment is a nuptial one, which entitles them to enter the heavenly bridal chamber.

5. the special coronation and the young virgin life in the mold

The Office of the Virgins says: “Come, bride of Christ, receive the crown which the Lord has prepared for you for eternity.” What the Church promised at the Consecration of the Virgin, especially at the presentation of the wreath, but also at the bestowal of the ring, is now fulfilled in heaven. The Virgin will be crowned with glory and honor. The coronation is to recognize that the Virgin has fought heroically and won gloriously. Therefore, she may now share in the glory of the heavenly Bridegroom, specifically in the royal dignity. In the hymn, Jesus himself is called the “crown of virgins.” Christ is the reward of the virgins. The virgin may enter into a spousal union with Christ in heaven, which is even more intimate than the mystical union on earth.

Voluntarily the virgins on earth have

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XXIH. Heavenly Premonitions in the Virgin Life

Renunciations and deprivations taken upon themselves. Now the compensation, the reward shall take place. They may enjoy a miraculous fruit, because they have won the victory over the world and over the flesh. Because of the Kingdom of Heaven they have remained virgins and this promised land is given to them. Theirs is now the Kingdom of Heaven, because they were poor and humble in spirit. In their purity of heart, they may look at God. The longing of love, which was nowhere completely fulfilled, is satisfied in excess. All the mysteries and sweets of Christ are given to them in abundance. Like the most beautiful lilies that have been transplanted to the Kingdom of Heaven, they blossom, and among these lilies Christ walks, making everyone happy and blessed to the highest degree.

On the last day, the body will also be raised, transfigured and taken up to heaven. In its virginity, this body was probably especially consecrated to the divine Savior. Already on earth he took part in the transfiguration of grace in a virginal way. At the consecration of virgins, the virgin souls were told that one day their bodies would receive the garment of immortality. The extraordinary sacrifices, which rest in virginity, are a special reason for this. How virginal-lightful they now shine in the resurrection body. High above the earth, God has prepared the heavenly dwelling for them.

6. conclusion

The scholars of God say that the virgin souls still receive a special reward, an extraordinary crown (Rev 14:3). For they have heroically triumphed over the flesh. Therefore, a special joy is to be added to the essential blessedness. The virgins who have suffered martyrdom receive a second aureole, the one for the martyrs.

The virgin souls will be included in a chosen group, in the ranks of those 144,000 who, according to the Secret Revelation, will follow the Lamb wherever he goes (Rev 14:1). On their foreheads they bear the name of the heavenly Bridegroom. They are the firstfruits who are allowed to sing a new song, a song of their own. Wonderful harmonies are wafting through these groups. The heavenly joys of the virgin souls are described in the parable of the wise virgins under the image of the wedding feast. Christ dwells in their midst. God has anointed them with the oil of the virgin bliss of heaven. They are now eternally happy in their beauty, because the heavenly king has his gaze upon them (Ps 45:6). The flood of the river delights them.

6. conclusion

According to the legend, which was formed around St. George, a dragon is said to have made a wide area unsafe. In order to satisfy the demon, the king be

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to sacrifice a girl to him every day. The lot decided that the king’s daughter would also have her turn. The despair into which the king fell as a result caused a sensation. George decided to fight the dragon in order to save the king’s daughter. With the lance he wounded the monster so much that it became tame. On the advice of George, the king’s daughter took her belt, tied it around the dragon’s neck and led the evil beast into the city so that all the people could admire the victory. With his sword, the saint finally killed the demon completely. This legend could be interpreted to today’s situation. The demonic dragon is the immorality that threatens people. It penetrates to families, which still felt safe from the dangers. Like St. George, the Church now goes out to destroy the dragon. The belt of virginity has the wonderful power to bind the sensual passions. The virginal example still exerts a powerful effect today. At all times people have believed that perfect chastity makes a person strong in battle and confident of victory. Therefore, we would like to contrast the demonic of the time with the mystical of virginity.

The pagans, so a legend reports, imagined the justice as a virgin being. This pure justice once lived on the

6. conclusion

ser earth. But the people became worse and displaced the virgin spirituality. Since it had no more place in the world, it fled up into the stars and lived on there as a constellation (virgin). But the good people did not forget the virgin justice and longed for it all the more, the more unjust the bad people became. They expect an improvement of the society only if the virgin comes back. Therefore they would like to bring down this good, pure and shining being. If people would pay homage to this virgin again, the legend explains, we would soon have a “golden age”. It seems to us that this legend would be repeated. The virgin spirit of truth, justice and love has disappeared from the earth. Where has he withdrawn to? Today we call him to renew society. The greater the evils become, the higher must be the ideals with which we try to heal.

According to an old folk belief, a shell, called Margrita, rested deep at the bottom of the sea. Rumor has it that this shell promises good luck. That is why people look with longing into the blue sea, if they could not reach the secret. All their longing does not help them. So they beg for a mercy from heaven. Suddenly, a flash of lightning travels from the sky to the bottom of the sea. The shell catches the fire and rises up

6. conclusion

up to the surface. Full of joy grab some

Virgins after this light bulb. In

their hearts begins a virgin fire

burning a mysterious happiness in

awakened in them. They want to share this happiness with others. Therefore they carry the fire shell of the light and the love also to the people. In the night of the time a fire of the sky lights up, which wants to be protected virginally.

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